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# “Release Hitting”: An Analytical Study Commemorating the Artistry of the South Korean Shaman Musician Kim Yongt’aek

Simon Mills

WITH the death of Kim Yongt’aek in February 2018, South Korea’s East Coast hereditary shaman tradition lost its foremost instrumentalist—a masterly musician who had been the Intangible Cultural Property holder for the style (ICP 82-1) since the passing of his uncle Kim Sŏkch’ul in 2005. This article celebrates his artistry by presenting a detailed musical analysis of one of his ritual performances, recorded by the author in 2000. In the chosen recording, Kim plays the diminutively sized variant of the doubled-headed *changgo* that is used within this particular tradition to accompany the singing of his shaman wife Kim Yŏngsuk, with whom he performed ritual for over 50 years. In the typical fashion for the East Coast hereditary shaman ritual tradition, the husband-and-wife core is complemented by a junior ritualist (Kim Jinhwan), who marks out the most significant beats in the music on the large gong (*ching*), and a small group of other ritual musicians who provide intermittent episodes of hand-gong (*kkwaenggwari*), led by Kim Yongt’aek’s cousin Kim Junghee.

Of all the various traditional Korean musical genres, the East Coast shaman ritual style unquestionably fosters the most complex rhythmic cycles (*changdan*)—repeating metrical structures varying in duration from just a few beats up to 40 beats and forming the temporal frameworks for musical expression. The rhythms played within these frameworks are also exceptionally varied. The following transcription-based analysis focuses on one of the tradition’s most intriguing structures called “*tchoshigae*,” with the primary objective of elucidating Kim Yongt’aek and his wife’s rhythmic artistry when at the height of their powers. This article also seeks to go beyond musical analysis to explain how the ritualists’ rhythms contribute to meeting ritual objectives. First, however, it is fitting to provide brief biographies of Kim Yongt’aek and Kim Yŏngsuk, and further details about *tchoshigae*.

## KIM YONGT’AEK AND KIM YŎNGSUK

Kim Yongt’aek was born in 1946 as the youngest son of Kim Hoch’ul (father, d. 1966) and Kim Ch’aebong (mother)—leading figures in the East Coast region’s most powerful family of shamans, who performed rituals for a great many coastal communities ranging from Pusan up to the North Korean border within all three Eastern provinces (Kangwŏn and North and South Kyŏngsang). The pressures upon the young Kim to pursue the shamanic profession were strong, coming both from within and without; at that time, the profession was still being fostered within a strictly endogamous hereditary social institution in the region (Ch’oe Kilsŏng 1981, 115–16). While his parents were living in Taejŏng, on the outskirts of P’ohang,

when he wasn't attending primary school, he sometimes attended their rituals. There, he developed skills like making paper flowers, carrying out errands, and playing the large gong for the simplest musical structures, motivated by gifts of fruit, sweets and suchlike. He recalled feeling that the music was "marvellous" (*shin'gi hada*) and remembered sneakily borrowing a hand-gong when he was around 8 years old, wishing to reproduce some of the wonderful patterns. His father heard his efforts, was impressed, and declared his intent to pass on the skills (interview with Kim Yongt'aek, 12 July 2000).

It was when Kim was in the second year of middle school, at the age of 12, that he received a stern talk from his father: "When we don't exist anymore, you must take charge of the inheritance"—and he then started learning "properly" (*chedaero*) and "formally" (*chöngshigŭro*). He quit school, joined the family troupe in its incessant ritual activities, and was introduced to more demanding roles. By this point, his father had re-married to the celebrated shaman Yi Kŭmok and the family had moved to the seaside town of Samch'ök, partly as a strategy to enlarge and consolidate ritual territory. Kim was sent to one of the last shaman confraternity training centers (known as "*hyöphoe*") in the region—a thatched building on the town's outskirts in which the sons and daughters of allied ritualists lived and practiced the ritual arts together. Kim recalled that some of the elders, especially his father, were harsh disciplinarians, meting out punishments to assert authority and ensure hasty learning: "We were told: 'You have to master this material before a certain time; if you don't, you die.' Who learns in this kind of way nowadays, receiving beatings? Nobody" (Mills 2007, 81). When he first arrived at the center, there were 13 girls and 4 boys but "one by one they ran away." Through a kind of socio-musical natural selection, only 3 survived to learn all the essential details (interview, 12 July 2000).

From around the age of 16, Kim Yongt'aek began accompanying his stepmother Yi Kŭmok on the drum, being given increasingly challenging ritual sections to tackle. Soon afterward, his wife-to-be Kim Yöngsuk (b. 1949) was unofficially adopted into the family at the age of 15, becoming Yi's "spirit daughter" (*shinttal*) and main inheritor of the tradition. Kim Yöngsuk had passed the entrance exams for a prestigious girls' high school in nearby Kangnŭng but "the spirits had come" unexpectedly, calling her to the shamanic profession through a bout of spirit sickness (*shinbyöng*; see also Yun Tonghwan 2007). Such adoptions have always been fairly common amongst the East Coast hereditary shamans even though they foster a non-charismatic style of ritual in which the spirits are not invited into the officiating shaman's own being and in which healing is evinced solely through artistic skill and propitiatory action. The young Kim Yöngsuk duly set about learning the ritual arts through intensive practice with Kim Yongt'aek under the guidance of Yi Kŭmok, Kim Yongt'aek's father, and his uncles Kim Sökch'ul and Kim Chaech'ul. Gradually, the pair acquired mastery over the repertoire's structures, establishing intricately detailed shared knowledge of how sung text and drum accompaniment could best be combined to elicit powerful effects (interview, 12 July 2000). On multiple occasions, Kim Yongt'aek told me that his wife had learnt quickly from the outset, with a "computer brain" ideally suited both to

remembering texts and tunes and to creatively manipulating them during performance—skills subsumed under the shamans' own term "*munsŏ*" (Pak Kyŏngshin 1993, 12). As Kim put it: "While it took me eleven years to attain mastery, it took her just two. So, she is really is a genius (*ch'ŏnje*), you see." He claimed that, even as a novice, she was able to keep the song flowing without experiencing the "blockages" (*makhida*) that usually plague beginners (interview, 19 April 2000).

After his father died in 1966, Kim Yongt'aek took over as his stepmother's accompanist, maintaining that role until her passing in 1991 while also accompanying Kim Yŏngsuk. He told me that he and Kim Yŏngsuk had attained "perfect mastery" by the time they were married at the age of 21. At this time, the elders announced, "this will do, you have now inherited the job" and gave a small monetary gift (interview, 10 April 2014). However, his younger cousin Kim Junghee contested this interpretation, telling me that they did not forge their own distinctive personal styles and reach their peaks of virtuosity until many years later. He suggested that, when I first saw them in 1999 and 2000, I was fortunate to be seeing the tail end of their golden period. By that point, they had had many decades to perfect their art and they still had the bodily and mental strength to create powerful sounds for long periods. Meanwhile, Kim Sŏkch'ul was still casting his ever-critical eye over their work, village patronage for the troupe's rituals had not yet plummeted, and they were enjoying supervising the next generation (interview with Kim Junghee, 20 April 2014). Sadly, however, not long after Kim Yongt'aek took over as the troupe's leader, he suffered a major heart attack while playing drum during a ritual and never fully recovered before succumbing to other health problems. Of particular frustration to him and his followers was the fact that his hands soon became unable to execute the patterns for which he once had been so celebrated.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Kim Yongt'aek maintained a public tough-guy personality that was mirrored in a tough musical style characterized by so-called "straight-hitting" (*chikt'a*), making much of stark contrasts between extraordinarily loud strokes and relatively soft strokes (see Mills and Park 2017, 13–14). As junior troupe member Chŏng Yŏllak, put it, Kim's playing became the "textbook" version of the tradition's drumming (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, his wife Kim Yŏngsuk cultivated a fittingly tough singing style. While the other female shamans in the troupe employ extensive eye contact, gesture, and facial expression to engage with the drummer and the community whenever it is their turn at the mic, she tends to maintain a deadpan facial expression, move her arms and body only a little and in slow motion, and either sing with her eyes shut or stare into the middle distance over everybody's heads. This is not to say that her demeanor is cold; rather she gives the impression of deep introspection, as though completely immersed in the internal world, comprising both the calculating processes of *munsŏ* and a well of strong emotion. At the most heated points, she shout-sings into the mic with an extremely abrasive vocal timbre, but when singing of somebody's sorrows in the first person, her voice drops down into quiet "weeping song" (*urŭm sori* or *shisŏl*; see Mills 2012, 150–51) and tears pour down her cheeks. Throughout it all, she retains the same introspective demeanor. As Chŏng Yŏllak once told me, "she is different from



the others, isn't she?" and he drew my attention to the aforementioned fact that she, unlike the others, had experienced profound psychological pain when being called by the spirits (interview, 20 July 2007). Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that she and Kim Yongt'aek would also occasionally fill the ritual space with humor, as suggested in Illustration 1.

#### INTRODUCING *TCHOSHIGAE*

On hearing of Kim Yongt'aek's death, I immediately sought out my field recordings of him and Kim Yöngsuk performing Ch'omangja kut—the central section of Ogu Kut, a seldom



**Illustration 1.** Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Yöngsuk during a ritual in Nasa village, 20 September 2013. Rather unusually, a female shaman is playing the hand-gong: Kim Yongt'aek's cousin, Kim Yönghui. Two other hand-gong players are situated to the right of Kim Yongt'aek and the altar is situated behind the shaman (off camera)—the typical arrangement.

performed post-death ritual conducted to guide deceased spirits to a “good place” (*chohŭn dae*) and facilitate closure for the bereaved. This section has a special status, in part because it constitutes the crux of the ritual: the officiating shaman sings and speaks of the deceased’s final sentiments, initially representing their distress and unwillingness to leave but then, following various prayers and procedures, demonstrating a new resolve to sever earthly ties and embark on the one-way journey to the afterlife. Further, it features some of the tradition’s most hard-to-play musical structures, including *tchoshigae*, *tŭrŏnggaengi* and *tojang*.

Accordingly, within the Kim family troupe, it had long been Kim Yongt’aek and Kim Yŏngsuk who had taken the responsibility for tackling this section’s challenging content, and in Yi Duhyun’s fieldwork recordings of an Ogu kut conducted by the troupe in 1982 (constituting the earliest published recordings of the ritual), it is they who are in charge (Yun Tonghwan, Chŏng Yŏllak and Son Chongjin 2013). Frustratingly, however, and for reasons unknown, Yi did not audio record the particular episodes that will be explored in this article.

The following analysis specifically explores the pair’s performance of *tchoshigae* at an Ogu Kut conducted in Kisŏng village, Kangnŏng province, on 28–29 April 2000 for two young unmarried individuals—a man named Sŏ and woman named Hwang—who had not known each other in life but had died at about the same time in tragic circumstances. Illustrations 2 and 3 show the tent in which this ritual was held and the “dragon boat” (*yongbae*), made by the ritualists themselves, which was used as a spirit vessel during the ritual, especially when enacting the deceased’s eventual journey to the “other world” (*chŏsŭng*).

In line with standard procedure, the ritualists performed *tchoshigae* as the first major component of Ch’omangja kut, immediately following an introductory instrumental structure called *p’unŏri* (discussed in Mills 2007, 42–54). *Tchoshigae* serves to summon the spirits of the dead, bemoan their predicament, and elucidate the difficult journey ahead. On this occasion, to relieve the two spirits’ frustrations and, more importantly, those of the bereaved, the Kim



Illustration 2 (left). The tent in which the Ogu Kut was held.



Illustration 3 (right). The “dragon boat” (*yongbae*) used during the ritual—one of many beautiful items of symbolic paraphernalia manufactured out of paper by the shamans.

family troupe integrated a spirit-marriage ceremony within the Ogu Kut and, accordingly, the text of *tchoshigae* was tailored to address the predicaments of both spirits and detail their marriage.

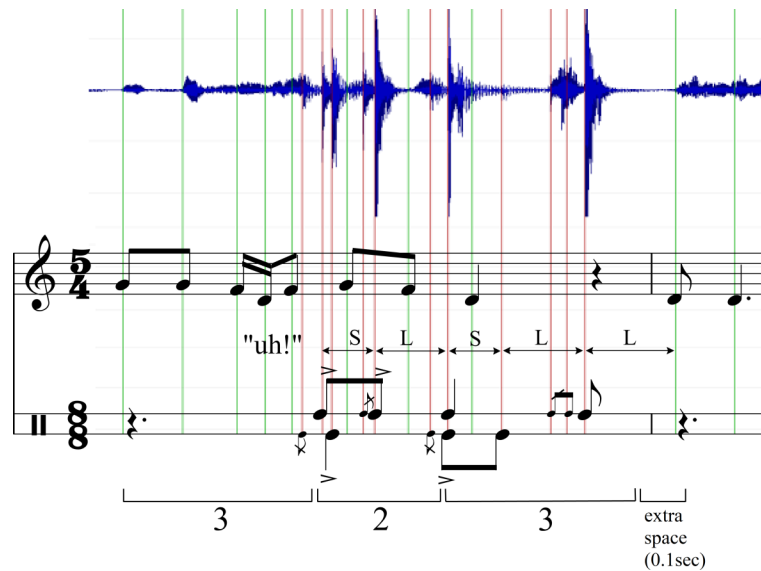
I have selected *tchoshigae*—and, moreover, this particular performance of *tchoshigae*—for deep enquiry because it presents some especially complex metrical structures as well as some fascinating instances of metric ambiguity, polyrhythm and virtuosity, thereby highlighting the celebrated skills of Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Yöngsuk. In addition, unlike many other structures in the repertoire, *tchoshigae* does not feature any short and simple cycles and is not used to tell a story. Elsewhere, I have presented a detailed analysis of Kim Yongt'aek's handling of one such cycle in a narrative context, showing how he masterfully manipulated his rhythmic patterning (including the subtle micro-rhythmic placement of strokes) to complement the narrative and evince strong effects, encouraging the assembled throng to get up on their feet and dance (Mills 2010b). This current article can therefore be considered as a partner to the earlier publication, exploring other aspects of Kim's artistry while shining light on a rather different part of the repertoire.

I focus here on the intricate interplay between vocal and instrumental parts in *tchoshigae*, while also considering how musical patterning relates to text content and ritual objectives—something which, to my knowledge, no other publication has attempted in relation to this tradition's music. My analysis is based on a field recording, and relies in part on Sonic Visualiser (Cannam, Landone, and Sandler 2010), which has allowed me to slow down the playback, add differently colored markers to the display to indicate the onsets of sounds (green for voice and dark red for drum and hand-gong), make precise measurements of durations, and, from there, generate staff-notation transcriptions and deductions about how the ritualists are ordering their patterning.

In the ensuing analysis, when exploring finer details of rhythmic timing, I often employ a notational system that fuses the green and red onset markers of the Sonic Visualiser display with conventional staff transcription. This ensures that one can see precisely when sounds happen in relation to one another while also conveying, with great immediacy, essential details about relative duration (through the attribution of note denominations), note groupings (though the use of beams), and specific pitches and types of stroke (through varied positions on the staves and different note-head types). A typical example is provided in Example 1, although in later examples I omit the actual waveform image for the sake of space efficiency.

As will be discussed in more detail later, this short passage (2:46–2:49 in the accompanying recording) evidently involves Kim Yöngsuk (top staff) demarcating a 5-beat (5 quarter note) arrangement that is isochronous on the subtactus (eighth note) level, while Kim Yöngt'aek (bottom staff) marks out a 3+2+3 arrangement which is non-isochronous on the subtactus level, comprising three un-demarcated pulses followed by S L S L L (where S and L signify short and long pulses); a brief space of 0.1 seconds remains before Kim Yöngsuk





**Example 1.** An example of hybrid notation, fusing marked-up Sonic Visualiser readout with conventional staff-notation transcription, with annotations added. The top staff shows the vocal patterning of Kim Yöngsuk while the bottom shows Kim Yongt'aek's *changgo* rhythms.

continues. In this example and all following examples also, I have used a two-line staff to represent the drum rhythms; strokes played on the higher-pitched (right-hand) head are represented on the top line, with accented strokes marked by conventional accent symbols, strokes executed lightly using only the tip of the stick marked by dots, and rapidly executed grace-notes represented by small-sized acciaccaturas; strokes played on the lower-pitched (left-hand) head are shown on the lower line, with dampened strokes represented by *x*-shaped note-heads and with rapidly executed grace notes shown by small-sized acciaccaturas. Hand-gong patterning is represented on a single-line staff and strokes on the large gong are marked with a large *X*. Meanwhile, Kim Yöngsuk sings using a rather low-pitched tessitura extending from approximately G below middle C up to the C above middle C. Certain individual pitches within the musical mode known as *menari t'ori* are occasionally subjected to upward or downward shifts of approximately a semitone to produce varying intervallic relationships, especially in the first part of the performance; in practice, *menari t'ori* does not maintain a fixed set of intervallic relationships throughout performance. In the interests of limiting both the use of ledger lines and additional accidentals, I have transposed everything up by three semitones.

To help make sense of the song text, which is full of obscure archaic regional language to the point of being mainly unintelligible to standard Korean speakers, I consulted another of Kim Yöngsuk's *tchoshigae* renditions (recorded on 30 March 2000) and Kim Hösön's (2006) transcription of the text that Kim Yöngsuk sang during the Ogu Kut for Kim Sökch'ul. Although Kim Yöngsuk swaps around the order of much material in successive performances and includes content that is tailored to the specific case of the deceased, certain phrases

appear to be more or less indispensable. Next, I contacted Chŏng Yŏllak and his wife Hong Hyojin, who are middle-aged ritualists within Kim Yongt'aek's troupe. For passages that even they could not comprehend, Chŏng and his wife kindly asked the elders within the troupe on my behalf. Throughout this translation process, I was assisted enormously by Sung-Hee Park, a native Korean speaker.

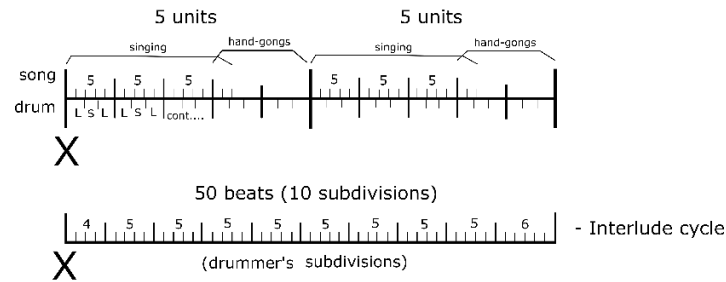
### THE ANALYSIS OF *TCHOSHIGAE*

*Tchoshigae* is comprised of three sections, known by the ritualists as "chapters" (*chang*), each based on a slightly shorter rhythmic cycle (*changdan*). Interspersed between and within each chapter are some instrumental interludes where the singer falls silent and the hand-gong players perform alongside the drummer and large-gong player. These interludes employ metric structures that are closely related to and yet slightly different from the three main cycles. Two academics have previously considered *tchoshigae*'s structure: Chang Hwiju (2008, III–13) and Cho Jonghun (2013). Although they present valuable assessments of essential metric details, neither has addressed the structures of the interlude cycles or examined the intricate interplay of the ritualists' patterning within the various frameworks. Interestingly, even though they both base their interpretations on renditions by Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Yŏngsuk and concur about the essential details of the second- and third-chapter cycles, they present markedly different interpretations of the first chapter's cycle: while Chang claims that it is based entirely on 3+2+3 metric units, Cho claims that it is based entirely on 5-beat units. As I will go on to discuss, neither assessment is entirely incorrect: in fact, 3+2+3 and 5-beat arrangements are *both* conspicuously present, the former in the drum and hand-gong parts and the latter in the shaman's song, although other arrangements also appear.

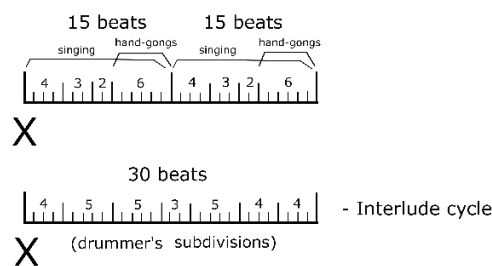
Figure 1 fuses and builds upon the interpretations of Chang Hwiju and Cho Jonghun's representations of *tchoshigae*'s succession of cyclic structures. As can plainly be seen, throughout the whole of *tchoshigae*, the beginning of each cycle is clearly punctuated by a stroke on the large gong (marked by an X), serving an anchoring role for performers and listeners alike. It is essential to note the following caveats, however, when examining this representation: the internal arrangements of the first cycle's units sometimes differ from what is shown, particularly in the shaman's song line; the shaman's ways of dividing up the second- and third-chapter cycles are not indicated simply because there is no single typical way; the hand-gong players' approach to subdivision is also not indicated; and Kim Yongt'aek sometimes adopts different ways of dividing up the cycles in the second and third interludes. It is also essential to note that, in the selected recording (as well as several others dating from that period), the large gong strikes a second time after the fifth unit in the first cycle. Given that this cycle's two halves are treated in an identical fashion by the ritualists, this means that, for all intents and purposes, in the recording, the first chapter's cycle is just 5 units long.

Throughout these sections, Kim Yongt'aek, Kim Yŏngsuk and the hand-gong players indulge in diverse forms of fascinating rhythmic patterning, which will be explored in the

## First Chapter



## Second Chapter



## Third Chapter

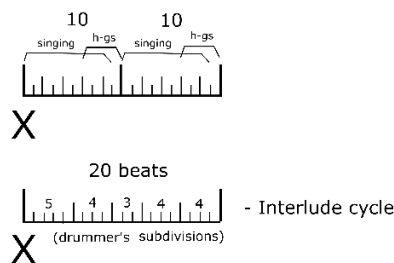


Figure 1. A diagrammatic representation of *tchoshigae*'s three-chapter form.

ensuing analysis. Special attention is given to the first chapter, simply because it features the most varied, complex and initially hard-to-comprehend patterning. Thereafter, the second and third chapters are addressed. Subsequently, the three interlude sections are examined in close conjunction with one another because they share a great many attributes. Finally, a concluding discussion contemplates how the various musical features uncovered through analysis help to serve ritual objectives.

### TCHOSHIGAE'S FIRST CHAPTER

Chang Hwiju (2008, III–13) asserts that each of the 5 countable units in the first chapter's cycle—a denomination known as *k'ansal* in the ritualists' own terminology—employs a 3+2+3

(long-short-long) arrangement. Chang's assertion is well-founded: although further qualification is required to acknowledge *tchoshigae*'s profoundly polyrhythmic character and the inherent micro-rhythmic malleability of the units' long-short-long segments, a long-short-long arrangement does indeed run throughout the performance and there are passages where a 3+2+3 arrangement is unambiguously and precisely demarcated, conforming to the typical structuring of non-isochronous additive meters as outlined by Justin London (2004, 100–15), wherein the irregular counted units are underpinned by an equal-duration subtactus. Various other musical structures in the ritualists' repertoire employ cycles composed of strings of 3+2+3 units in which the equal-duration subtactus is consistently precisely demarcated, including the first chapters of *türönggaengi* (10 units; see Mills 2010a), *ch'öngbo* (10 units) and *tunabegi* (4 units), and it makes sense to group *tchoshigae*'s first chapter alongside them, despite its greater complexity.

At the very start of the selected performance, Kim Yongt'aek performs solo, as is the standard practice for *tchoshigae*. As he sings “Come, come, return” to summon the deceased spirits (0:00–0:08), he presents simplified forms of patterns that will subsequently permeate the performance (see Example 2). Nowadays, the ritualists often label such material as “foundation patterns” (*kibon p'aet'ön*). For all musical structures, it is the convention to begin in this way before embarking on more challenging patterning.

Here, Kim Yongt'aek's patterning conspicuously includes a 3+2+3 arrangement (boxed), as well as an alternative configuration of 3+3+2, which also features prominently in the other aforementioned musical structures. Right from the outset, Kim Yongt'aek concludes each unit with a “ki-ri-dak” anacrusis (marked with asterisks), enhancing the music's forward flow. This persists throughout *tchoshigae*'s first chapter in all 5 of the cycle's units.

At the start of the following cycle also, Kim clearly articulates 3+2+3 patterning in his drumming, although here, he ingeniously overlays a triplet feel and makes his sung patterning (“Oh spirits!”) go against the 3+2+3 grain by marking out 4 equal beats (see Example 3, 0:12–0:16). In this unit, he is introducing a number of characteristic features that

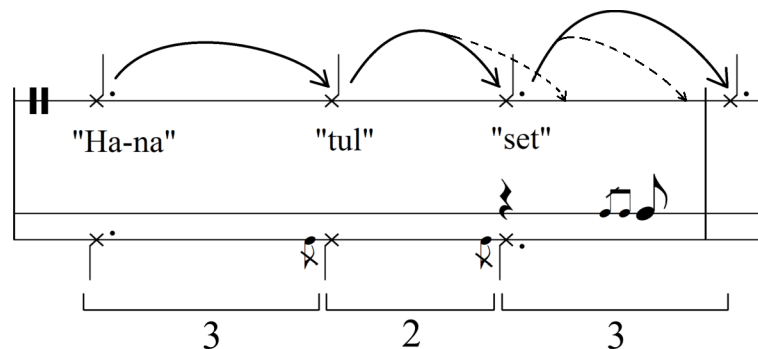
**Example 2.** “Come, come, return” (0:00–0:08): patterning at the beginning of *tchoshigae*'s first chapter, featuring 3+2+3 and 3+3+2 arrangements. Click [here](#) to access the recording that accompanies this and subsequent examples.



**Example 3.** "Oh spirits!" (0:12–0:16): 3+2+3 rhythmic patterning in the drum part being pitted against vocal patterning that demarcates 4 equal beats, with added triplicity in both the drummer's right hand and voice.

will go on to prevail throughout much of the following voice/drum interplay and which will be discussed in more depth later: lightly executed triplet pulses in the drum setting up the initial subtactus for the vocal part (exclusively at the very start of the cycle); frequent duple/triple juxtaposition and switching; and a long-short-long non-isochronous arrangement in the drum being pitted against an isochronous arrangement in the voice. At this point in the performance, despite the contrasting rhythmic arrangements in the vocal and drum lines, there are still many points of co-incidence, marked below by dotted lines. The final "ki-ri-dak" pattern is highlighted again via an asterisk.

Later in the same performance, Kim Yongt'aek himself explicitly pointed out the primacy of the 3:2:3 arrangement to the three young male ritualists and I; all of us were seated close beside him and were just beginning to learn about *tchoshigae*'s complex contents. At a suitable moment in the music's flow, when he was demarcating 3+2+3 proportions in an unambiguous and precise fashion with the final "ki-ri-dak" flowing promptly into the following unit, he pointedly looked toward us and shouted out "*hana – tul – set*" ("one – two – three"), as shown in Example 4. Here, Kim Yongt'aek seemed to be highlighting not only the primacy of 3+2+3 patterning but also the way in which one should ideally experience this



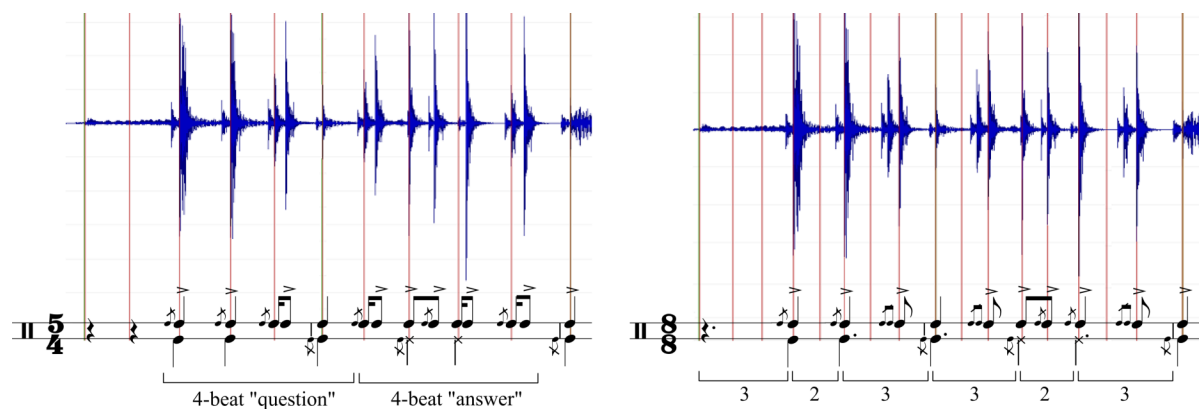
**Example 4.** Kim Yongt'aek shouts out "one – two – three" while playing 3+2+3 patterning (2:20–2:23). In this representation, the solid black arcs reflect the pitch inflections of his voice.



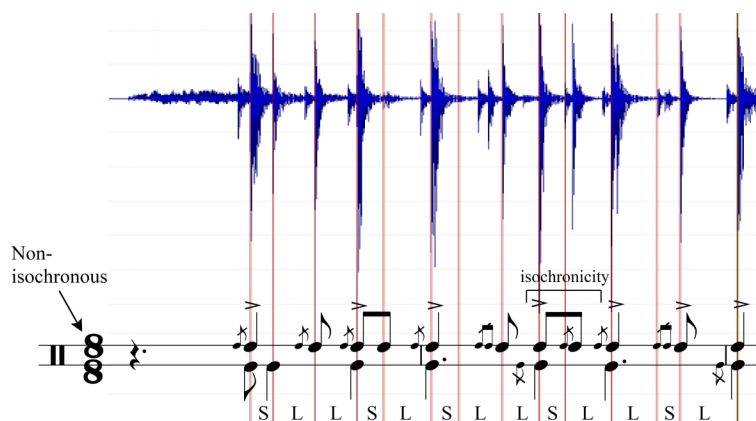
rhythmic arrangement—namely, as a pattern of feeling. His representation conjures up analogies with the movements of a bouncing ball or a triple-jumper, implying a conception of rhythm and meter sharing much with that outlined by Christopher Hasty (1997); here too, each musical event seems to be interpreted as setting up a projective potential, which is then met or countered by the placement of the next event to evoke particular feelings. Specifically, in this case, Kim appears to be underlining how the projective potential established by “two” (indicated by the first dotted line in Example 4) is not fully realized because “three” happens rather sooner than expected (after just a quarter note); this then has an immediate follow-on effect, with the following “one” conversely being felt to happen a little later than expected. Outside of the ritual setting, Kim would often tell the younger learners that they should strive to advance beyond counting out durations and, instead, learn to “feel” (*nŭkkida*) them. He once told me of how he had particularly enjoyed playing the large gong when he was a novice; it had enabled him to listen to all the other parts and attain “a feel for the longs and the shorts” of the music.

3:2:3 and 3:3:2 proportions are also evident in the final two units of each cycle (units 4 and 5), where the hand-gong players and drummer execute set patterns, making only minor alterations in successive renditions. In the very first cycle, Kim Yongt’aek plays the patterns alone, continuing on from Example 2 (above) with Example 5 (0:07–0:12). At this point, the patterning is metrically ambiguous and may be perceived either as demarcating a 5-isochronous beat framework (5a)—presaging the rhythmic arrangement that Kim Yöngsuk frequently employs—or as continuing to mark out 3+2+3 arrangements (5b). In this respect, it appears to constitute a multi-stable pattern, as outlined by Friedson (1996, 139–47).

In units 4 and 5 of the next cycle, shown in Example 6, Kim is still playing alone (0:23–0:28). However, his rendition of the set pattern can no longer be perceived in terms of 5 beats due to his insertion of certain extra strokes and his application of swing on the subtactus level, which renders the music more deeply non-isochronous. Specifically, the 8 constituent pulses



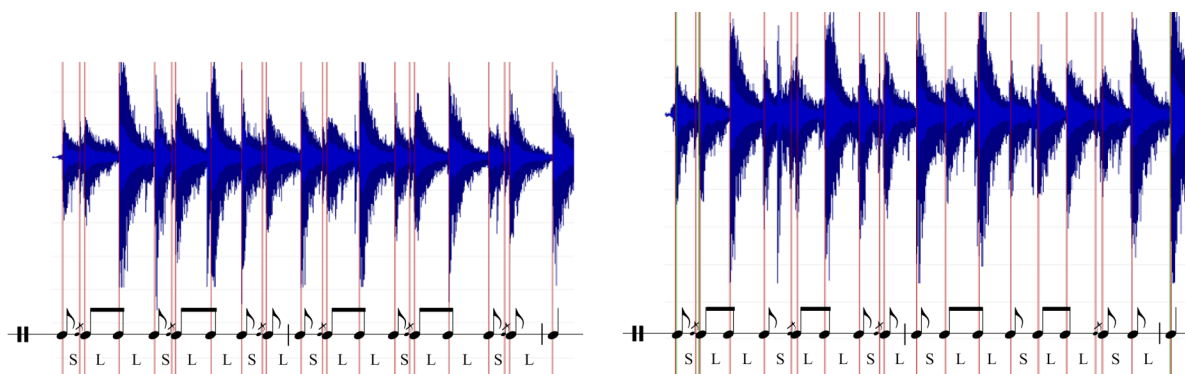
**Examples 5a (left) and 5b (right).** Multi-stable patterning (0:07–0:12); two ways of perceiving units 4 and 5: as 5-beat units containing 4-beat “question” and “answer” phrases (5a) or as 3+2+3 (5b).



**Example 6.** Kim Yongt'aek's 3+2+3-based patterning in units 4 and 5 (0:23–0:28). This patterning is always non-isochronous on the sub-tactus level (S L L S L S L).

now adhere to the pattern S L L S L S L, although the initial S L L is not demarcated in unit 4. In unit 5, Kim includes an element of isochronicity in the central 2 strokes (marked in the example); he tends to do so in the following cycle renditions also, where it creates a pleasing rhythmic disjuncture against the hand-gong players' patterning.

Hereafter, the hand-gong players join Kim in units 4 and 5, invariably demarcating the same S L L S L S L arrangement (3+3+2). However, they never rigidly adhere to a specific short:long ratio but rather vary the music's feel by altering the degree of swing applied. On most occasions, they maintain a short:long ratio of approximately 2:3, which ensures smooth forward flow, as in Example 7a, below. At other points, however, they seek to iron out the duration difference; because the non-isochronous S L L S L S L arrangement is imbedded in the grain of the meter and is always demarcated by Kim Yongt'aek, this act is perceived not only as impeding the forward flow but creating a marked tension. Significantly, the most pronounced instance of this ironing out occurs just after Kim Yöngsuk has belted out some

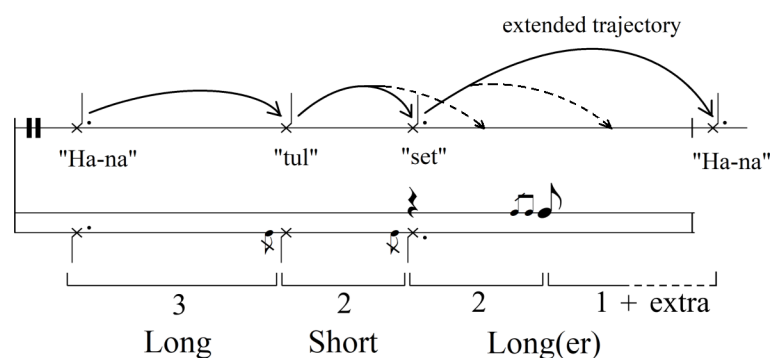


**Examples 7a (left) and 7b (right).** Hand-gong patterning in units 4 and 5 (3+3+2), with the S L L S L S L S L swing maintained (7a, 3:02–3:07) and with the swing being ironed out via lengthening the S pulses (7b, 6:01–6:06).

particularly impassioned lines: “Who could have known that, in an instant, like wood in a fire, your life would leave your body?” This instance is shown above, in Example 7b, where one can see that most of the short pulses (S) are significantly lengthened and, correspondingly, the long pulses (L) are shortened. It is worth noting that, within these examples of hand-gong playing, the grace notes are executed relatively quietly and are crushed against the following strokes, so it is always the main strokes that are perceived as the primary onsets.

So, the feel of long-short-long does indeed run through units 4 and 5 of each cycle rendition, with a deeper level of non-isochronicity also consistently present. Meanwhile, long-short-long proportions almost invariably run through units 1, 2, and 3 also—and this is why Chang Hwiju’s (2008, 113) designation of 3:2:3 as the prevailing metrical arrangement is understandable. However, closer analysis reveals that the exact proportions of 3:2:3 are actually seldom precisely demarcated in units 1, 2, and 3. Rather, in those cases where a long-short-long arrangement is evident, it is more common to preserve the relative proportional durations between “one,” “two,” “three,” and the final anacrusis upbeat but lengthen the concluding duration between the upbeat and following “one” by varying amounts: 3+2+2+1-and-extra, with the “extra” ranging from as little as 0.1 seconds to as much as 0.8 seconds (the equivalent duration of two additional pulses). This phenomenon is represented in Example 8, again alluding to Kim Yongt’aek’s aforementioned vocal exclamation and Hasty’s theory of projection (with dotted lines indicating the approximate expected projective potential deriving from “two” and “three”).

A clear example of this occurs during the final cycle where Kim Yongt’aek performs alone. As he sings “O spirits! Grandfather leading, father following, come!” in units 1 and 2, he extends the final durations between the anacrusis and following first beats while also adding heavy accenting on each stroke: see Example 9, where the extended anacrusis are boxed (0:28–0:37). The resulting patterning seems to evoke the determined yet off-kilter march (3+2+2+2) of a motley band of ancestors making the tortuous journey from that world to this. In other performances of *tchoshigae*, Kim Yongt’aek sometimes enhanced the macabre imagery at this point by singing of the ancestors leading each other along by their withered wrists and such-



**Example 8.** The 3+2+2+1-and-extra arrangement typically employed by the drummer in units 1, 2 and 3.

sounds like: 3 + 2 + 2 + 2 3 + 2 + 2 + 2

X

flowing

**Example 9.** "O Spirits! Grandfather leading, father following, come!" (0:28–0:37): evocative prolongation of 3+2+3's final pulse, creating a temporary feel of 3+2+2+2.

like. As can be seen in the transcription, he reinstates the exact 3:2:3 proportions in unit 3, ensuring hasty onward flow into the following instrumental units.

When Kim Yöngsuk starts singing in the very next cycle (0:43), the music immediately becomes more complex and rhythmically varied and, furthermore, characterized by polyrhythmic interplay between singer and drummer. In her sung passages, she frequently switches between a wide variety of frameworks, including 5 isochronous beats (equivalent to 5/4), 6 isochronous beats (6/4), 4 isochronous beats (4/4), 5+5+5 isochronous pulse beats, 3+2+3 with isochronous subtactus, 3+2+3 with non-isochronous subtactus, 7+7+7 isochronous pulse beats, and unusual additive configurations such as 2+3+3+3+3 (14 pulse beats). Meanwhile, in his drum part, Kim Yongt'aek either stretches and compresses the aforementioned long-short-long proportions to conform with and reinforce her patterning—for example, articulating 2:1:2 proportions (instead of 3:2:3) when she adopts a 5 isochronous beat metrical arrangement—or he evokes powerful polyrhythmic effects by maintaining proportions based on the aforementioned 3+2+3+extra framework and pitting his rhythms against hers. In addition, there are many units in which he strives for a compromise by combining or switching rapidly between elements that conform with the vocal patterning and elements that go against it; while a simple example of this compromising approach has already been provided (in Example 3, above), more complex instances will be explored later. As Justin London (2004, 99–110) explains, it is highly debatable whether a single individual can actually keep two contrasting metrical systems cognitively operational at the same time. Nevertheless, the impression given in such instances is that of a hybrid metrical arrangement. We now turn to explore these various types of complex rhythmic interplay between voice and drum in more detail.

Kim Yöngsuk begins her singing with some further entreating: "Pitiful and greatly troubled one / O ghost, spirit of Sō / Return," represented in Example 10 (0:54–1:08). This passage reveals a number of defining musical characteristics, which pervade the whole of *tchoshigae*'s first chapter. The vocal line clearly demonstrates frequent division of the unit into 5 isochronous beats and extensive oscillating movement between adjacent pitches. In addition, it exemplifies frequent switching between duplet and triplet patterning, frequent

most common framework

duplet/tuplet switching

Pul-ssang k'o ae ch'am man-hŭn ni-ma, ō yŏl - shin. Sŏ-sshi yŏng-ga To-ra - - - o - so.

lightly tapping sub-tactus pulses

Long Short Long 3 Long Short Longer 3 Long Short Long

silence

flowing cont...

**Example 10.** “Pitiful and greatly troubled one / O ghost, spirit of Sŏ / Return” (0:54–1:08): the first cycle in which Kim Yŏngsuk and Kim Yongt’aek perform together.

switching between equal-duration groupings (for example, a pair of eighth notes) and unequal-duration groupings (for example, a triplet eighth note followed by a triplet quarter note), and a lack of extended melisma. The linguists Brown and Weishaar (2010) identify these latter qualities as commonplace features in spoken language also, not only for “stress-timed” languages like English but also for “syllable-timed” languages such as Cantonese or Korean. As these authors are keen to point out, “no language . . . is based on constant strings of isochronous syllables” and all speakers are liable to vary syllabic durations, especially when attempting to convey deeper emotional content. Accordingly, the conspicuous presence of these qualities in the sung rhythms of *tchoshigae*’s first chapter suggests a close relationship with spoken Korean language—and, indeed, when one speaks out the song texts using Kim Yŏngsuk’s rhythms, the results seem remarkably “natural”-sounding, as though the recited texts have only been mildly adjusted to conform with closest-fit musical durational values via a process akin to rhythmic quantization. For example, when saying the line “*Pulssang k’o ae ch’am manhŭn nima, ōyŏlshin Sŏ-shi yŏngga*,” it feels perfectly natural to articulate the pairings “*pul-*” and “*ssang*,” “*ae*” and “*ch’am*,” and “*ni-*” and “*ma*” as equal duration, elongate the “*k’o*,” articulate “*manhŭn*” as short-long, execute “*ōyŏlshin*” as short-long-long, and so on.

Meanwhile, Example 10 also displays some essential defining characteristics of Kim Yongt’aek’s drum accompaniment, which go on to occur in most cycle renditions. Specifically, Kim begins the first unit by lightly tapping out sub-tactus pulses on the higher-pitched drumhead, precisely establishing the tempo for Kim Yŏngsuk’s benefit and promoting an impression of harmonious unity before elements of polyrhythmic disjuncture are introduced. Thereafter, for units 2 and 3, he adopts a 3+2+3+extra framework, leaving emptiness within the initial long segment of the long-short-long arrangement (boxed in Example 10) and then varying the density of strokes in the following short and long segments; during these units, there tends to be more pronounced polyrhythmic interplay against the vocal patterning. At the end of unit 3, he reduces the gap between the anacrusis upbeat and subsequent “one” (marked by an arrow), engendering more precise 3:2:3 proportions and a hastier flow into the following instrumental units.

Unit 2 of this particular cycle is shown in more detail in Example 11 (0:57–1:00) to introduce the reader to the subtleties of polyrhythmic interplay that prevail in *tchoshigae*'s first chapter. Here, Kim Yongt'aek's stroke placement precisely adheres to the aforementioned 3+2+2+1-and-extra proportions: following on from the first stroke, the second and fourth strokes are both less than 50 ms off perfect mathematical accuracy—a degree of accuracy that is commonly encountered in Kim Yongt'aek's handling of this arrangement. Thereafter, 0.43 seconds of "extra" time remains before Kim Yöngsuk completes her patterning, takes a short breath of about 0.2 seconds, and begins the next unit. Here, the ritualists are displaying typically ingenious micro-placement: despite adopting different metric frameworks and evoking some light polyrhythmic interplay, they still achieve multiple moments of perfect co-incidence at metrically significant points.

The next cycle introduces some noteworthy new rhythmic features in conjunction with the text "O ghost, spirit of Hwang: she comes to this house to get married" (1:08–1:17). In the first unit, shown in Example 12, Kim Yöngsuk introduces some word painting, executing a

**Example 11.** "O ghost, spirit of Sö" (0:57–1:00): the juxtaposition of precisely measured 5-beat and 3+2+2+1-and-extra arrangements, shown in detail.

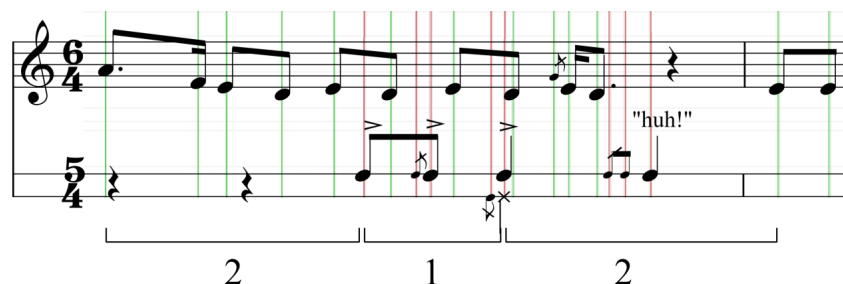
**Example 12.** "O ghost" (1:08–1:11): perfect synchrony with many points of co-incidence (compare with Example 3).

wavering line that darts this way and that as she sings “O ghost.” Exploiting the fact that music tends to be perceived as being alive (see Bonini Baraldi 2017), here her patterning plays a crucial role in actualizing the invisible spirit; accordingly, words such as “spirit” and “ghost” are often articulated in such a manner within the ritual context. Meanwhile, as before, Kim Yongt’aek begins by tapping out the subtactus and underpinning her singing with a conforming 2:1:2 arrangement, engendering many points of coincidence (marked with dotted lines). In this way, the cycle begins in a state of perfect synchrony and harmoniousness.

In the ensuing second unit (1:11–1:14), the ritualists generate a stark contrast by introducing pronounced asynchrony, articulating patterning that differs markedly from its equivalent in the previous cycle (represented earlier in Example 11). Here, it is Kim Yöngsuk who switches metric arrangement, picking up the pace and dividing the duration into 6 isochronous beats, while Kim Yongt’aek continues to articulate a 2:1:2 arrangement (see Example 13).

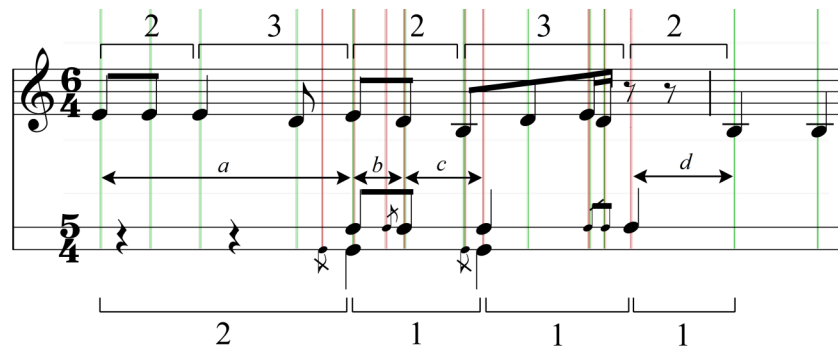
Kim Yöngsuk’s switch to a 6-beat arrangement is evidently not for the purpose of cramming in syllables; this passage contains only 7 syllables. Rather, the switch seems to derive from the aforementioned emulation of speech rhythm while also indicating an aesthetic penchant for creating varied polyrhythmic effects. Here, Kim Yongt’aek’s strong accenting ensures that the polyrhythmic disjuncture is especially pronounced, and he underlines it by exclaiming a heartfelt “huh!” In the second and third units of following cycle renditions also, Kim often executes variants that are closely related to this, similarly featuring silence in the first long division, two short “tak” strokes in the central short division, and “tak ki-ri-dak” in the final long division—and the following paragraphs duly focus on how he handles these particular variants elsewhere.

As it happens, Kim plays another closely related variant in the very next unit of the same cycle (1:13–1:16). Here, although both musicians retain their respective rhythmic arrangements (6 vs. 5), Kim Yöngsuk switches from divisive to additive patterning (2+3+2+3+2) and Kim Yongt’aek subtly alters the micro-rhythmic placement of the strokes within the variant (see Example 14). While reducing his accenting, he subtly expands *a* and *c* and reduces *b* to engender significant points of co-incidence and thereby soften the previously established



**Example 13.** “Spirit of Hwang” (1:11–1:14): juxtaposition of 6-beat and 5-beat (2:1:2) arrangements, generating pronounced asynchrony.



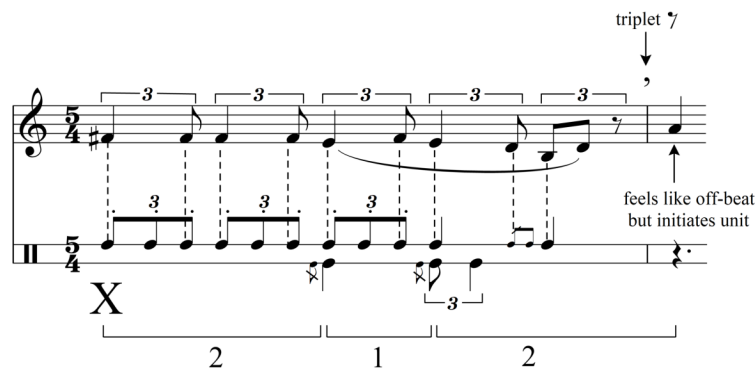


**Example 14.** "She comes to this house to get married" (1:13–1:16): juxtaposition of 6-beat and 5-beat arrangements, manipulated to evoke more synchrony.

polyrhythmic conflict. His reduction of *d* ensures, once again, that flow into the concluding units is enhanced.

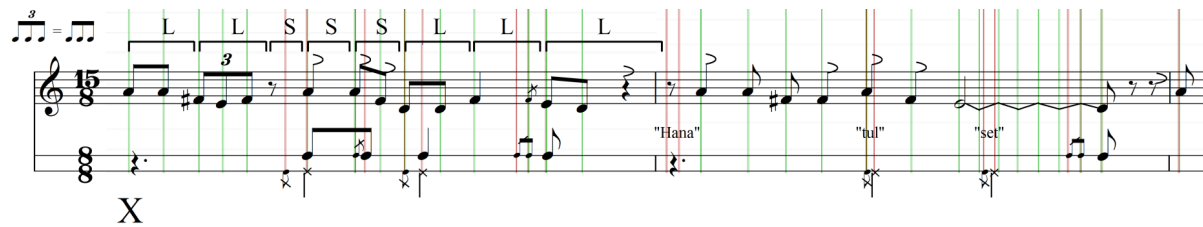
Several cycles later, we hear Kim Yongt'aek execute another closely related variant—strictly adhering to the 3+2+2+1-and-extra proportions and occurring in conjunction with some especially intriguing vocal patterning, wherein Kim Yöngsuk explains that "The spirit of Hwang / By marrying into her husband's household / Avoids becoming a spinster ghost" (2:14–2:23). Although the cycle's first unit is again characterized by tightly synchronized patterning within a shared 2:1:2 framework (see Example 15), the ritualists go on to present us with a number of perceptual challenges. Firstly, Kim Yöngsuk waits for precisely a triplet eighth note before initiating unit 2 and, despite the following note being perceived as an off-beat, it turns out that it is this very note that constitutes unit 2's starting point, from which Kim Yongt'aek projects his patterning.

Thereafter, further perceptual challenges ensue, which are shown in Example 16 (2:17–2:23): Kim Yöngsuk outpours a rich mixture of triplet/duplet rhythmic denominations in units 2 and 3; Kim Yongt'aek articulates a strongly accented variant in unit 2, evoking some marked



**Example 15.** "The spirit of Hwang" (2:14–2:23): another case of perfect synchrony with many points of co-incidence, though posing a perceptual challenge at the close.





**Example 16.** “By marrying into her husband’s household / She avoids becoming a spinster ghost” (2:17–2:23): Kim Yöngsuk’s mathematically precise mixed-denomination patterning, with a re-configuration of S L L S L L S L / 3+2+3 durations imbedded.

moments of disjunction; and, following the end of unit 2, Kim Yöngsuk again adds a short rest but, in this case, it is the rest (rather than the next note) which turns out to constitute the following unit’s beginning, as is underlined by Kim Yongt’aek’s aforementioned shouting out of “*Hana – tul – set*” (“one – two – three”). This passage constitutes one of those for which 15/8 ( $5 \times 3/8$ ) is clearly a more workable choice of time signature; this is because Kim Yöngsuk is now employing a mixture of durations that perfectly correspond to triplet eighth note (0.12 seconds), eighth note (0.18), triplet quarter note (0.24), quarter note (0.36) and half note (0.72). However, because the triplet groupings frequently do not add up to a beat, I have adopted a notational adaptation devised by the composer Jo Kondo, on the helpful suggestion of my colleague John Snijders; here, hooks are added to triplet-denomination notes that do not fit within beat-length triplet groupings.

This is one of many passages in which Kim Yöngsuk demonstrates timing that is surprisingly mathematically precise: all of the note durations in this patterning are within 12 ms of being perfectly mathematically accurate (although the hand-gongs cut short the concluding rest of unit 3 by 80 ms). Furthermore, while Kim Yöngsuk’s patterning in unit 2 perfectly fits within the 5-beat framework, it also constitutes an ingenious reconfiguration of the S L L S L L S L / 3+2+3 doubly non-isochronous arrangement employed in units 4 and 5 (shown in Examples 6 and 7); here, the reconfigured sequence is L L S S L L L, maintaining the short:long ratio of 2:3 and with the final L remaining characteristically long. The final oscillation at the close of unit 3 (marked by a zigzag line in Example 16) is also a noteworthy feature: play-back at a greatly slowed-down tempo reveals just how tightly coordinated the ritualists’ musical actions are at this point, with the final “dak” of Kim Yongt’aek’s “ki-ri-dak” pattern coinciding immaculately with Kim Yöngsuk’s arrival on the phrase’s final D after seven equal-duration oscillations. Clearly, when Kim Yongt’aek was telling me of his wife’s remarkable “computer brain,” he was referring not only to her celebrated skills as a wordsmith but also to her remarkable facilities at measuring, marking and reconfiguring durations. Of course, examples such as this demonstrate that he too possessed a “computer brain” and that their two minds had become hyper-sensitively attuned over decades of living and performing together.

Over the next two cycles, Kim Yöngsuk sums up the goals of the entire ritual: "By being joined together as husband and wife in that world / Receiving this ritual / With Buddhist prayers and accrued blessings / [They go to] A good place, a good place / With no hatred or resentment [also meaning 'endlessly'] / Releasing the frustrations of [what couldn't be done in] this world" (2:28–2:50). As she sings "With no hatred or resentment" in unit 2, Kim Yongt'aek plays patterning that perfectly matches hers; having performed with her over many decades, he knows that she will articulate these words in precisely this way. Immediately afterward, however, he reintroduces conflict by vigorously articulating his most richly detailed variant as she sings of the "frustrations of . . . this world" (see Example 17, 2:43–2:50).

While Kim Yöngsuk's patterning maintains a 5-beat framework that is strictly isochronous on both the beat and subtactus level, in this case, it is Kim Yongt'aek's patterning that is non-isochronous on both levels, with the S L S L S L L arrangement again being related to that employed in units 4 and 5. To ensure that his patterning is even more captivating, Kim Yongt'aek begins with a thoroughly unsynchronized cluster of strokes, including a strongly accented displaced "kung" in the left hand. He then conjures up an intricate web of internal relationships by mirroring the initial right-hand pair of eighth notes in the left hand, though with precisely synchronized strokes, different accenting, and a more tightly articulated initial "ku" sound (represented here by a small-sized note with downward-pointing stem). This is a powerful passage of word painting, presenting us with a crystallized musical representation of wished-for harmonious existence, conflict-ridden actual existence, the near-unfathomable complexity of all things, and the human need to relinquish oneself of frustrations through cathartic unleashing—with the music itself implying that the ritualists have a thorough grasp of these various matters. Kim Yongt'aek underlines the heightened significance of this patterning with a heartfelt "uh!"

Moving on to consider other types of metrical arrangement employed in the vocal line: in addition to the aforementioned 6- and 5-beat frameworks, the singer sometimes employs a 5+5+5 pulse framework. Here, the exact same subtactus pulse is employed as demarcated by

The musical notation for Example 17 consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line is in 5/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'uh!' exclamation. The piano accompaniment is in 5/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'uh!' exclamation. The notation includes a 5/4 time signature, a key signature of one flat, and a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'uh!' exclamation. The piano accompaniment includes a 5/4 time signature, a key signature of one flat, and a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'uh!' exclamation. The notation includes a 5/4 time signature, a key signature of one flat, and a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a 'uh!' exclamation.

**Example 17.** "With no hatred or resentment / Releasing the frustrations of [what couldn't be done in] this world" (2:43–2:50): perfect synchrony followed by polyrhythmic disjuncture, featuring an especially richly patterned variation by Kim Yongt'aek (with S L S L L swing pattern).

the drummer at the start of unit 1, but it is organized into groupings of 5 (2+3 or 3+2) instead of groupings of 3. This is first heard during Kim Yongt'aek's solo introduction, when he sings "Spirit of Sŏ / Spirit of Hwang" while also introducing the captivating doubly non-isochronous variant discussed in the preceding paragraph (see Example 18, 0:15–0:21). Interestingly, in this context, the drum patterning enclosed in the box may either be perceived to conform with the 5+5+5 framework or provide a subtle rhythmic counterfoil, therefore constituting another example of a multi-stable pattern. In the former case, however, it would be the asterisked grace note that would coincide most closely with the perceived pulse beat rather than the immediately following main stroke.

All of the musical examples discussed so far have been selected from the first half of *tchoshigae*'s first chapter, preceding the mid-way instrumental interlude (beginning at 3:37). Although the same rhythmic devices are spread evenly throughout the chapter, in this performance, Kim Yŏngsuk concentrates the more emotion-laden questions about death and colorfully evocatively descriptive passages in the second half (4:16–6:23), and she intersperses further examples of unusual rhythmic arrangements here also. The text in the second half is as follows:

How can it be that we're doing this ritual? How can it be that you're deceased souls?  
 You've heard that we're doing this ritual, so ask for permission from the country head  
 and regional head [of the other world].  
 It takes a day to get here and a day for the ritual, so ask for three days' absence.  
 Is it because you've only asked Kolmaegi Sŏnghwangnim [the village guardian deity,  
 who superintends communities in this world rather than the other] that you can't  
 come?  
 Cut the flowers and put them in your hair, tear the leaves to make an oboe, break the  
 reeds to make a walking stick,  
 Snap off a branch to clear the dew and, from Paekdu Mountain, down a valley pass, and  
 over Horong Mountain, come a-whooshing.

**Example 18.** "Spirit of Sŏ / Spirit of Hwang" (0:15–0:21): 5+5+5 / 3+2+3 multi-stable patterning.

The mountains you used to look at are still green, the water you drank is still fresh.  
Pitiful dead man Sŏ, the traces of your movements and the roads you often travelled all remain.

Who could have known that, in an instant, like wood in a fire, your life would leave your body?

You said that you'd return but have you forgotten the way? How can it be that you can't return?

Is it because it's too dark before you?

The climax of this passage begins when Kim Yŏngsuk sings "Who could have known . . . ?" as loudly as possible and with her most abrasively raspy vocal timbre. The patterning for the first two units of this line is shown in Example 19 (5:53–5:59).

Kim Yŏngsuk begins this passage by adopting a 5+5+5 framework, subdivided as 3+2/2+3/2+3, at which point Kim Yongt'aek shouts out "*ŏtbak*" ("five beats") to educate the assembled novice ritualists about the switch. For the following unit, she generates still more intensity by making a further change to how the unit's three equal-duration segments are subdivided, establishing a 7+7+7 framework wherein each segment is subdivided into three groupings instead of two: 3+2/3+2/2+3 becomes 3+2+2/3+2+2/3+2+2. Finally, for the third unit (5:58–6:01), which is represented in Example 20, she switches framework yet again, executing 3+2+3 patterning that is non-isochronous on the subtactus level, conforming precisely to the rhythmic arrangement being played by Kim Yongt'aek—specifically, the S L L S L L S L of units 4 and 5, with an element of isochronicity added by the asterisked stroke.

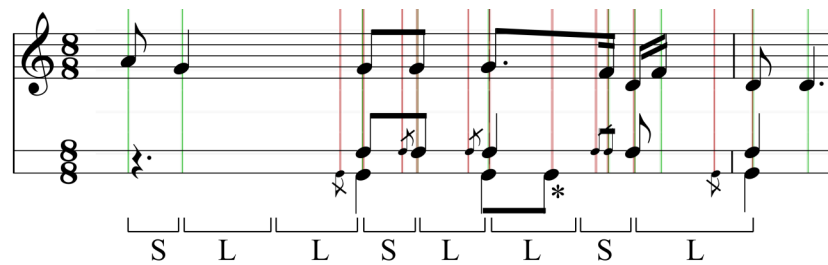
In the next cycle ("You said that you'd return but have you forgotten the way? . . ."), Kim Yŏngsuk traces a closely related but subtly different series of switches (6:05–6:13). In the first unit, she substitutes the equal 5+5+5 divisions with a series of contracting unequal divisions (6+5+4). Then, after adopting the same 7+7+7 framework for the second unit, she switches to 3+2+3 patterning that is isochronous on the subtactus level, as shown in Example 21.

Switch to 7x3 (21/8) framework

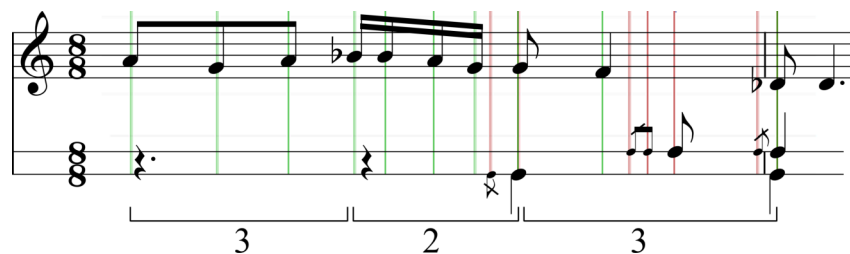
Switch to 3+2+3 framework

X

**Example 19.** "Who could have known that, in an instant, like wood in a fire, your life would leave your body?" (units 1 and 2, 5:53–5:58): 5+5+5 patterning transforming into 7+7+7 patterning.



**Example 20.** “Who could have known . . . ?” (unit 3, 5:58–6:01): shared adoption of 3+2+3 patterning that is identically non-isochronous on the subtactus level.



**Example 21.** “You said that you’d return but have you forgotten the way?” (unit 3, 6:10–6:13): 3+2+3 patterning that is isochronous on the subtactus level.

Before moving on to explore *tchoshigae*’s other cyclic structures, it is necessary to elucidate one other essential feature of this first chapter—specifically, Kim Yongt’aek’s hybrid patterning in unit 1. Although all of the previous unit 1 examples have demonstrated drum patterning that conforms with a 15 pulse-beat constitution in the vocal line (represented as 5/4 or 15/8), in roughly 50% of cycles, Kim strives to hybridize elements of his wife’s rhythmic arrangement with 3+2+2+1 patterning. In so doing, he demonstrates his skills as a masterful mediator—someone able to bring together elements from two contrasting temporo-spatial realms into a state of harmonious co-existence, which is, of course, a primary objective of the shaman’s practices. A typical example of this occurs immediately after Kim Yöngsuk has sung of the spirits going to “A good place, a good place / With no hatred or resentment / Releasing the frustrations of what couldn’t be done in this world.” Kim Yöngsuk then continues: “Go to that world and have a good time [literally, ‘make lots of stories’] / Go to that world and live well / Together with your parents and siblings.” The patterning for the first clause of this text (unit 1) is shown in Example 22 (2:53–2:57).

As usual, Kim Yongt’aek begins this unit by marking out the subtactus pulses of the vocal part. However, in this case, he uses the pulses to generate a 3+2+2+1-and-extra arrangement, specifically by taking 5 of the pulses to comprise the first segment (equivalent to 3 eighth notes) and then projecting the remaining proportions on the basis of that initial duration—a method that he applies in exactly the same way in other cycles also. While the remaining strokes are precisely positioned in accordance with this framework’s 3+2+2

tapping out subactus

X 3 2 2 1 + extra

1 sec 0.64 0.63 0.33 0.83

**Example 22.** “Go to that world and have a good time” (2:53–2:57): hybrid patterning in the drum part for unit I, incorporating elements from the voice’s 5-beat arrangement within a 3+2+2+1-and-extra framework (non-isochronous on the subactus level).

proportions (deviating by less than 40 ms), the central pair of eighth notes is again attributed with a short-long non-isochronous feel (marked as “S” and “L” in Example 21) and a substantial gap remains between the anacrusis upbeat and the start of the next unit (0.83 seconds).

A further example of hybrid patterning occurs in conjunction with the text “The Spirit of Hwang”—another case where evocative melodic movement is employed to imbue the “spirit” with vitality (significantly, immediately in advance of the text “Receiving source power from this ritual”; 1:21–1:24). In this passage, which is represented in Example 23, Kim Yongt’aek lightly executes Kim Yöngsuk’s subactus pulses more extensively before switching patterning, articulating 8 pulses over the space of the first two segments of the 3+2+2+1 framework before projecting the final distance to the anacrusis stroke on the basis of that duration, again with remarkable mathematical precision (with a deviation of less than 40 ms). As before, a considerable gap (of 0.52 seconds) remains before the next unit begins.

To conclude this section of the article, it is worth highlighting some of the main findings about the first chapter’s metrical constitution. Firstly, although the upper-level dimensions of

X 5 2 1 + extra

1.52 secs 0.57 0.30 0.52

**Example 23.** “The Spirit of Hwang . . . [Receiving source power from this ritual]” (1:21–1:24); unit I hybrid patterning in the drum part incorporating more extensive vocal-line subactus demarcation within the 3+2+2+1-and-extra framework.

the cyclical metric framework are fixed and the instrumental patterning in units 4 and 5 is set, within the first three units, the internal dimensions are evidently somewhat fluid, allowing the shaman and drummer to switch frequently between a variety of rhythmic arrangements. Secondly, the music is inherently flexible on the lowest metric level, facilitating intricate combinations of both triplet and duplet denominations (partly deriving from speech rhythm) and frequent switching between isochronic pulsation and various non-isochronic pulse arrangements. This enables the ritualists to explore diverse patterns of consonance and dissonance, synchrony and asynchrony, and harmony and conflict; significantly, these are key themes explored within the sung text also and, moreover, within shaman ritual as a whole. Thirdly, to ensure that the ritual attendees remain able to entrain to the music despite the frequent rhythmic arrangement-switching, long-short-long proportions are inbuilt within the metric template to be demarcated in most unit articulations. Although this long-short-long foundation is frequently relegated to the perceptual background amidst the polyrhythmic interplay, it nonetheless remains a continuous presence. Furthermore, although the final “long” segment is flexible in duration, such that units can vary in their total duration from 2.5 to 3.1 seconds, the deviations are never so much as to cause a break in the flow. Inquiry into how the first chapter’s evident flexibility of form and the frequent switching that it engenders may impact the ritual attendees’ experiences is presented in the conclusion section of this article. For now, however, discussion will turn to examine *tchoshigae*’s second and third chapters.

#### *TCHOSHIGAE*’S SECOND CHAPTER

The second chapter begins after another extended instrumental interlude (at 7:01). Like the first chapter, it starts with relatively simple “foundation patterning” that unambiguously demarcates the new cycle’s internal subdivisions. In this case, the cycle is exactly the same as for *ch’ongbo*’s second chapter (*ch’ongbo* being a frequently played multi-chapter structure in the repertoire), comprising two 15 beat halves with the 30-beat whole punctuated by a single large gong stroke. Contrasting greatly with the first chapter’s cycle, here, the cycle’s internal dimensions are entirely fixed. As also happens in *ch’ongbo*, the point at which the new framework is adopted is counterintuitively not punctuated by the large gong; rather, the gong strikes directly *after* the first 15 beats of “foundation patterning” (see Example 24, 7:01–7:07). This establishes a strong sense of being out-of-phase, which persists as the music continues, soon being complemented by further out-of-phase-seeming elements and unpredictable patterning.

As shown in Example 24, this metrical structure is characterized by a succession of 3 progressively contracting internal subdivisions (from 4 to 3 to 2 beats in duration) which are capped off by a 6-beat (2+2+2) closing pattern (*maennŭn karak*)—an internal structure mirrored in both halves. As in the first chapter, the sung text is concentrated in the first 3 subdivisions (accounting for three-fifths of the duration) and the hand-gong patterning is then concentrated in the remainder (accounting for two-fifths), although the latter is never

The image displays a musical score for a drum performance. It features two staves. The upper staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lower staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern. Above the lower staff, a sequence of numbers '4 3 2 6' is bracketed, indicating the duration of different rhythmic sections. To the left, a bracketed section is labeled 'closing pattern (ending the instrumental interlude)'. In the middle, a section is labeled 'swing (triplet feel)' with small 's' marks above certain notes. At the end of the sequence, a large 'X' is marked, with an arrow pointing to it and the text 'gong strikes after the foundation pattern'. The time signature is 15/4.

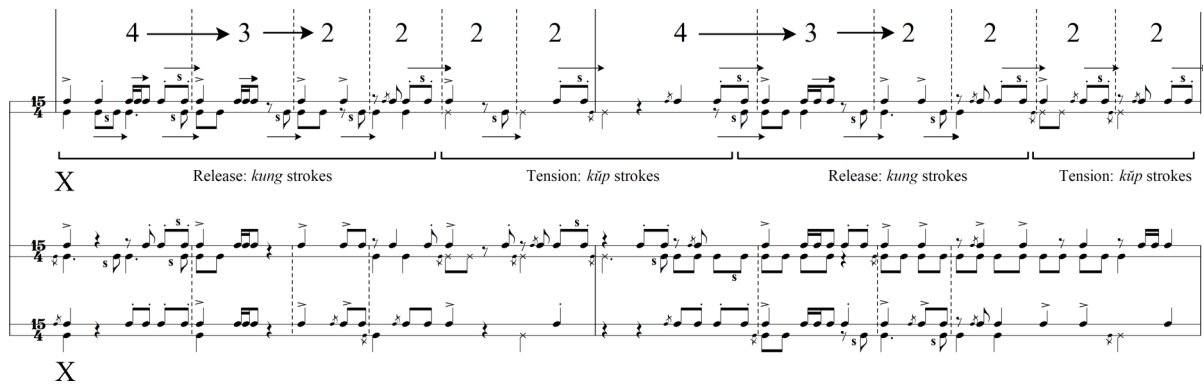
**Example 24.** “Foundation patterning” at the beginning of *tchoshigae*’s second chapter (7:01–7:07).

included in the very first cycle rendition. Sometimes, as in this case, the drummer provides an additional line of supportive vocalization during the last part, known as “*paraji*” within the tradition.

Even while the tempo remains stable—now ticking along at a fast-flowing 160 bpm—the 4+3+2+6 sequence naturally promotes a very specific repeating pattern of forward motion: a sense of continuously tumbling forward and reining back. Meanwhile, the drummer further modulates the flow by applying swing to certain pairs of eighth-note strokes, especially in the higher-pitched drumhead patterning; these are marked by small *s*’s in the transcriptions. Although Kim Yongt’aek varies his patterning from cycle to cycle, he nevertheless consistently demarcates these subdivisions throughout the performance.

Kim Yongt’aek augments and refines the inbuilt pattern of flow by carefully modulating the sounds produced on the lower-pitched drumhead. At the start of the cycle’s first half, during the tumbling-forward section, he tends to execute the strokes openly as “*kung*” sounds—letting the skin ring freely after being hit. But, then, during the final cadential section, he articulates dampened sounds, referred to as “*kŭp*” by the ritualists—forcing the stick into the head after collision and keeping it there until the next stroke. Kim continues executing dampened strokes as the cycle’s second half begins but quickly reverts to open strokes as the music once again tumbles forward. He concludes, as before, with dampened strokes for the final cadential pattern. Through these means, Kim imbues the music with a palpable effect akin to clenching and unclenching, which is further augmented by the aforementioned selective addition of swing. These features are apparent in Example 25, which shows the patterns of tension, relaxation and flow in the variation immediately following the “foundation patterning” (7:07–7:19). To demonstrate how closely related his variations tend to be and how they conspicuously manifest the same cycle-defining details even when the stroke densities are considerably varied, his patterning for the following two cycles is aligned directly beneath.





**Example 25.** Patterns of tension, relaxation and flow in a typical drum variation for *tchoshigae*'s second chapter (7:07–7:19), with denser and more sparse variations presented beneath.

Patterns of tension, relaxation and flow have been much theorized in relation to certain Korean musical genres, including *p'ansori* (for example, Po-hyeong Yi 1987, 11–15). However, the East coast shaman ritualists have never felt much need to theorize about such matters and neither have these issues been addressed within academia. Nevertheless, when I asked Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Junghee if this musical tightening and loosening related to the goal of “*p'uri*” (release), which is often cited by shamans as being an overriding objective, they answered in the affirmative. Kim Junghee, in particular, stated: “Of course, everything in our ritual relates to *p'uri*” (interview, 20 April 2008). Accordingly, I shall return to consider this and other therapeutic functions later in this article.

While Kim Yongt'aek consistently demarcates the same metric subdivisions within his drumming (4+3+2+6), the other musical parts vary how they divide up the duration, emphasizing different points of accent and subdivision to produce a texture characterized by what I suggest could be termed “poly-segmentation.” In this performance, Kim Yöngsuk switches unpredictably between diverse ways of segmenting the 15-beat duration, which are represented in Figure 2.

Crucially, none of Kim Yöngsuk's patterns of segmentation conform wholly with Kim Yongt'aek's template, so voice/drum phrase overlaps occur in every cycle. Most obviously, there is always such an overlap at the point marked by an asterisk in Figure 2. In Example 26, which shows all the parts that occur together with the drum pattern of Example 25, she employs 2+4+3+2+4 and 3+3+3+6 segmentation to sing: “Who could have known that you would leave so suddenly? / Come back, we miss you and don't know when you will return” (7:07–7:19). Here, one can see how some segment boundaries coincide while others do not. One can also see that the speech-based rhythms which pervaded *tchoshigae*'s first chapter, with their frequent shifts of duplet/triplet patterning, metrical arrangement and tempo, have been entirely abandoned.

Drummer's subdivisions:

4	3	2	2	2	2
---	---	---	---	---	---

Shaman's subdivisions:

2	2	2	3	6	
2	2	2	3	2	4
2	4	3	2	4	
2	2	2	2	2	5
2	2	2	2	7	
3	3	3	6		
3	3	2	2	5	

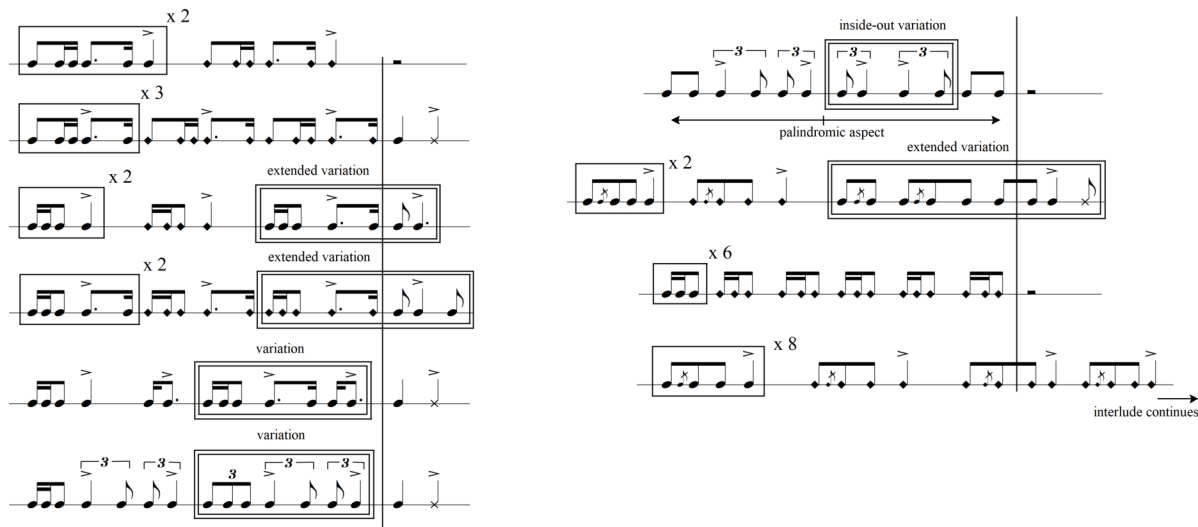
**Figure 2.** Kim Yöngsuk's ways of segmenting the 15-beat duration in *tchoshiqae*'s second chapter.

[illegible]

**Example 26.** “Who could have known that you would leave so suddenly? . . .” (7:07–7:19): poly-segmentation in *tchoshigae*’s second chapter, showing the segment boundaries for each part.

Kim Yongt'aek provides accompanying vocalization in roughly half of the cycles, starting at an unpredictable point toward the end of the 15-beat durations, avoiding close coordination with the other parts, and often traversing the cycle's end-point—thereby engendering additional moments of phrase overlap, as in Example 26. Meanwhile, in his solo hand-gong flourishes, Kim Junghee avoids accenting the same beats as Kim Yongt'aek (beats 1, 3 and 5 of the 6-beat cadential section), seldom emphasizes the cycle's first beat and mid-point, and takes care to present a distinctively different pattern on each occasion (rather than a single set pattern, as in the first chapter; see Example 27). Through these means, he adds another layer of patterning that is unpredictable, constantly varied and, crucially, sufficiently independence-asserting—a quality that will be explored in greater detail later.

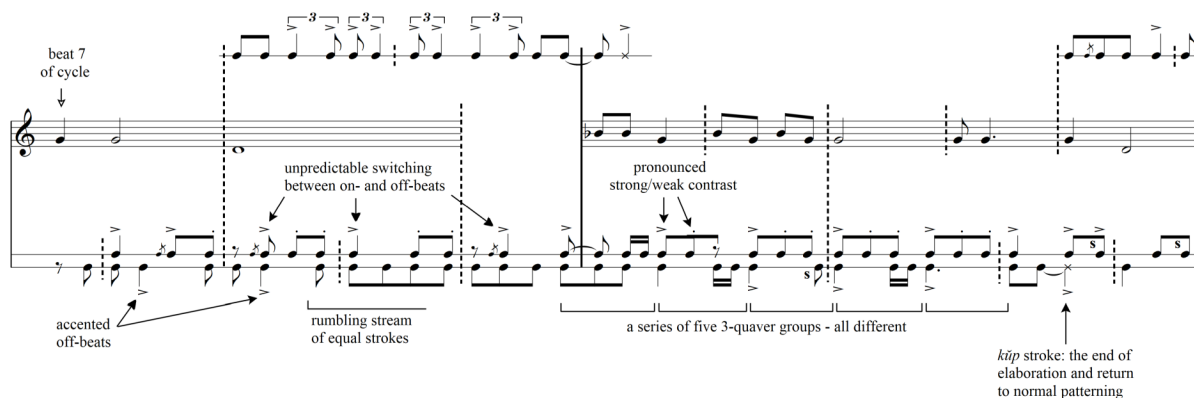
In a small number of cycle renditions, Kim Yongt'aek ceases evoking the usual clenching/unclenching alternation and unleashes a flurry of denser patterning featuring exclusively open-sounding strokes (with no dampened “*kŭp*” sounds) and patterning that traverses the cycle’s inherent subdivisions, thereby generating yet another overlapping



**Example 27.** Kim Junghee's hand-gong patterns in *tchoshigae*'s second chapter.

component within the texture: see Example 28, which occurs a little while later with the text “Our cousins are here / [Thinking of how] You left in an instant one day” (7:40–7:52). Here, Kim initiates a succession of five strong-weak-weak groupings just before the cycle's second half, culminating in the accenting of the cycle's central 2-beat subdivision; it is also worth noting how he subtly varies the internal composition of each grouping to make the patterning especially captivating. The other annotations in Example 28 highlight further defining characteristics not only of this passage but of Kim Yongt'aek's more soloistic playing in general.

The foregoing analysis has shown that, once *tchoshigae*'s first chapter is over, the ritualists adopt a very different approach to organizing rhythm. While, in the first chapter, the attentive focus is concentrated on micro-level details—on harmony and conflict taking place



**Example 28.** One of Kim Yongt'aek's more florid passages of elaboration in *tchoshigae*'s second chapter (7:40–7:52).

within and between beats—in the second chapter, the focus is on higher-level features—especially on how the different parts vary their grouping durations, shapes, and accenting to interact in unpredictable ever-changing ways. In short, the micro-disjunctures of polyrhythm are abandoned in favor of “poly-segmentation.” At the same time, the first chapter’s string of relatively discrete units—each a self-contained microcosm with clear-cut start and finish and its own internal web of temporal relationships—has given way to a long stream of perfectly isochronous beats, flowing fluidly from one to the next with almost every one being punctuated and none standing out as especially significant. Accordingly, one now senses that time is quickly ticking past as one listens in a state of heightened expectation. The concomitant growing sense of urgency is compounded by Kim Yöngsuk’s singing, which begins to repeat earlier entreaties, though now in briskly rhythmicized form, such as “Spirit of Sō and Spirit of Hwang, holding each other’s hands: Come back” and “Is it because it’s too dark before you that you can’t return?” The mood is one of growing impatience: why have the spirits not yet returned to the ritual space?

### *TCHOSHIGAE’S THIRD CHAPTER*

The third chapter (beginning at 10:01) introduces another new cycle which, again, retains the same essential proportional characteristics as its precursors: each half-cycle now consists of a succession of 5 tactus-level beats (or 10 subtactus pulses), with the shaman’s singing still being concentrated in the first three-fifths and the hand-gong patterning occurring in the final two-fifths. As before, the ritualists begin with a “foundation” version of the new cycle, without any hand-gongs and with the big gong stroke counterintuitively falling after the new framework has been adopted (see Example 29, 10:01–10:04). Here, Kim Yöngsuk sings “Quickly, quickly, return!” while Kim Yongt’aek adds “Return.” With the tempo now up to a rapid 190 bpm (quarter notes in the following transcriptions), the selective application of swing that characterized the second chapter is abandoned; instead, there is a preponderance of lightly executed equal-duration strokes.

closing pattern (ending the instrumental interlude)

2 2 2 4

X

gong strikes after the foundation pattern

**Example 29.** “Foundation patterning” at the start of *tchoshigae*’s third chapter (10:01–10:04).

Like other Korean shamans (see Walraven 1994) and other tellers of tales elsewhere (see, for example, Lord 1960, 30), Kim Yöngsuk employs diverse forms of formulaic repetition to impart extensive details in a well-ordered fashion, aid memorization and comprehension, extend sections over prolonged periods, generate and reiterate effective rhythms, and drive home essential content. For example, her performance of *tchoshigae*'s first chapter includes many applications of parallelism, including: "Cut the flowers and put them in your hair, tear the leaves to make an oboe, break the reeds to make a walking stick, snap off a branch to clear the dew" and "The mountains you used to look at are still green, the water you drank is still fresh [literally, also 'green']." In the third chapter, however, she now employs formulaic repetition in an all-pervasive fashion: after calling the spirits to return, she counts out weeks ("One week, two weeks, return! Three weeks, four weeks, return! . . ."), referring to the Buddhist practice of summoning a deceased person's spirit every week; then she tempts the spirits to return by listing the ritual space's various appealing items ("Food to eat, paper flowers to pick, lights to see by . . ."); and next, following another instrumental interlude, she poses a series of obstacles and solutions:

If darkness behind is preventing you from coming, return by the oil lamp on the altar.  
If being too hungry is preventing you from coming, return by the altar's food offerings.  
If being thirsty is preventing you from coming, return by drinking three cups of alcohol  
[referring to the convention of tracing three circles with a cup of alcohol at rituals  
honoring the ancestors]  
If lacking clothing is preventing you from coming . . .

It is this passage that is presented in Example 30 (11:23–11:45). Here, the aforementioned sense of out-of-phase-ness is evident in Kim Yöngsuk counterintuitively beginning each "If . . ." clause at the mid-point of the cycle rather than the start. One can also see that she no longer varies the melodic phrase lengths in this chapter. Meanwhile, Kim Yongt'aek continues to present a succession of closely related variations, demarcating the cycle's internal metric subdivisions while including other essential ingredients that further define the cycle's dynamic character: lack of eighth-note movement in subtactus pulse 2 of the cycle (comprising 20 such pulses); strings of lightly executed eighth notes in pulses 3, 4, 5, and sometimes 6; reduced eighth-note movement in pulses 7 to 12, with patterning that dissipates attentional focus away from pulse 11 (the start of the half-cycle); further strings of lightly executed eighth notes in pulses 13, 14, 15, and 16; and a cadential pattern to conclude. As before, Kim varies the density of his patterning, sometimes leaving lengthier patches of empty space or interjecting flurries of denser elaboration, and his vocal additions remain concentrated in the ends of the half-cycles, often traversing key points of subdivision to enhance the sense of continuous flow. Meanwhile, Kim Junghee continues to avoid matching the drummer's accenting and placing undue emphasis on the start- and mid-points of the cycle. All of these features are indicated in Example 30; because this extract follows the next instrumental interlude, the very first half-cycle does not include hand-gong patterning.

The image displays three musical score examples, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The scores are annotated with various musical terms and density labels.

**an average-density variation:**

- Lyrics:** "If darkness behind is preventing you from coming,"
- Annotations:** "return by the oil lamp on the altar.", "If being too hungry is preventing you from coming,"
- Density Labels:** "dense stream", "less dense", "dense stream", "closing cadence"
- Other Labels:** "traversing", "static", "accenting not on mid-point"

**a dense variation:**

- Lyrics:** "return by the altar's food offerings.", "If being thirsty is preventing you from coming,"
- Annotations:** "hey!"
- Density Labels:** "dense stream", "less dense", "dense stream", "closing cadence"
- Other Labels:** "traversing", "static", "accenting not on mid-point"

**a sparse variation:**

- Lyrics:** "return by drinking three cups of alcohol.", "If lacking clothing is preventing you from coming,"
- Annotations:** "ah!"
- Density Labels:** "closing cadence", "static"
- Other Labels:** "traversing", "accenting not on mid-point"

**Example 30.** “If darkness behind is preventing you from coming, return by the oil lamp on the altar . . .” (II:23–II:45); an extract from *tchoshigae*’s third chapter.

In summary, then, *tchoshigae*'s third chapter retains many of the essential features established in the second chapter, including out-of-phase cyclicity, clear punctuation of almost every subtactus pulse, prevalent unsynchronized accenting, and a balance of meter-defining and meter-defying elements within the texture—elements that demarcate points of structural significance and elements that cut across the boundaries. However, the shortened cycle, unrelenting repetitiveness (within both text and melodic patterning), and quickened pace (now at the very limits of feasibility) enhance the sense of urgency. Essentially, the ritualists appear to be vigorously pleading with the spirits to return. Following further questions like “Why can’t you return?” and “Is it because you’re too hungry?” and reassurance that “coming back just as a spirit will be enough,” Kim Yöngsuk concludes this performance of *tchoshigae* with the following:

Put your spirits (*nöksi*) in the spirit pot (*nökban*),  
Leave your bodies (*honbaek*) in the flower plot (*hwaban*).  
To this jewel (*kusül*)-like ritual place,  
Return.

Here, she employs a final instance of parallelism revolving around the word “*ban*” to underline that, while the minds and bodies of the deceased are truly dead and “amongst the flowers” (also making a reference to the brightly colored paper flowers which adorn the ritual space), their spirits endure and need to be summoned into spirit vessels for the purposes of cleansing. In the ensuing ritual sections, the spirits will indeed be transferred between a variety of spirit vessels, including a large paper boat, which is used to represent part of the deceased’s journey (see Illustration 3). In her final lines, Kim Yöngsuk highlights the remarkable “jewel-like” qualities of the ritual space itself, employing the word “*kusül*,” typically applied to spherically cut stones, glass beads or pieces of jade: the ritual space is similarly compact, self-contained, brightly multi-colored, rare, precious, and bearing magical qualities. While singing the last “return,” she abruptly slows the pace and Kim Yongt’aek promptly responds with a simple closing pattern (*maennün karak*) and final spoken statement: “It’s all like that, isn’t it?” Ideally, everyone now feels that something has changed in the atmosphere and that the spirits are present.

#### *TCHOSHIGAE*’S INSTRUMENTAL INTERLUDES

A number of instrumental interludes are interspersed throughout *tchoshigae*, initiated at points of the drummer’s choosing via simple signal patterns (*shinho karak*). In this particular performance, one interlude is positioned roughly halfway through the first chapter, one at the transition point to the second chapter, one halfway through the second chapter, one at the transition point to the third chapter, and two within the third chapter.

For each of the three chapters, there is an associated cyclic structure employed within its interludes. As mentioned earlier (see Figure 1), the full cycle of the first chapter is traditionally made up of two halves, with a single stroke of the large gong at the start and each half

comprising 5 units of 5 fast beats in the vocal part; for the first chapter interludes, this original  $5 \times 5 \times 2$  structure is directly translated into a rapid 50-beat cycle, which is played twice on each occasion (at approx. 216 bpm). Thereafter, for the second chapter interludes, the previously detailed  $15 \times 2$  structure becomes a 30-beat cycle, played three times on each occasion (193 bpm). And, for the third chapter interludes, the  $10 \times 2$  structure becomes a 20-beat cycle, played five times (210 bpm). In all cases, a single gong stroke marks the start of each cyclic rendition.

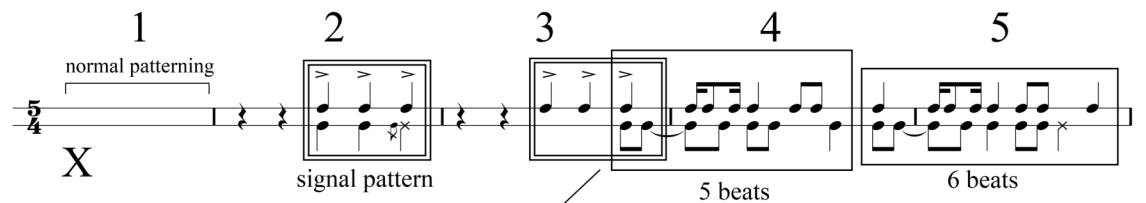
Although the interlude cycles evidently maintain a logical link to their associated chapter cycles (in terms of total numbers of beats), when playing these interludes, the instrumentalists invariably generate segmentation groupings that bear no perceivable relationship to the standard metric subdivisions prevailing during the sung episodes; accordingly, only an analytical listener meticulously marking out beats would be able to apprehend that there was any precise durational correspondence between them. In fact, for the interludes, the ritualists switch to a rather different mode of performance, which does not feature elsewhere in *tchoshigae*'s structure. This will be elucidated in the ensuing paragraphs.

Running through every interlude, Kim Yongt'aek produces dense streams of strokes in which almost every beat (quarter note) and most half-beats (eighth notes) are punctuated. While these streams fail to map comfortably onto the standard metric templates, at the same time, the listener is often unsure where the new segment boundaries lie within the flow, owing to the rapid pace, absence of segment-defining space, and lack of systematically differentiated accenting (where particular types of stroke, played in particular ways and combinations, are understood to consistently mark start- or end-points). Rather, the desired impression here is of a ceaseless stream of sound. Nevertheless, analysis reveals that Kim Yongt'aek does, unsurprisingly, favor certain ways of segmenting these lengthy cycles. In the first chapter interludes, he invariably divides up the 50-beat cycle into the following 10 segments:  $4 + (5 \times 8) + 6$ , with closely related variants in all 5-beat segments and a "kūp" stroke in the penultimate beat to alert the player of the big gong. Presumably, a set method of segmentation is applied because the risk of losing one's place within such a lengthy cycle would be very high if one were to attempt other segmentation configurations. Example 31 details this set  $4 + (5 \times 8) + 6$  segmentation, identifies common variants, and shows the three-stroke signal pattern (*shinho karak*, double boxed) used to break the preceding  $3+2+3$  framework (3:30–4:17). For this transcription and all following, it is essential to note that all long-duration strokes (quarter notes) are accented.

Interestingly, it is common practice for the ritualists to apply this exact same way of segmenting the cycle— $4 + (5 \times 8) + 6$ —within the instrumental episodes of other 10-unit structures in their repertoire—specifically, the first chapters of *ch'ŏngbo* and *tŭrŏnggaengi*—despite both of these being based exclusively on  $3+2+3$  units with no polyrhythmically interacting 5-beat component. In such cases, the new patterning seems particularly alien and



## Transitional cycle



## Interlude cycle



**Example 31.** Kim Yongt'aek's patterning in the first chapter's interludes (50-beat cycle, 3:30–4:17).

is referred to as “*tokkaekki*” by the ritualists, denoting a “diversion (*tolch’ul*) away from the music’s normal path,” as Kim Yongt’aek himself once explained it to me.<sup>1</sup>

The second chapter’s 30-beat interlude is only performed once in the selected performance, featuring the following segmentation: 4 + 5 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 5 + 4 + 4 (twice) and 5 + 3 + 5 + 2 + (1½ × 6) + (1 × 3) + 3—a particularly playful sequence of patterns (see Example 32, 8:11–8:41). Here, one can see some obvious commonalities with the first chapter’s interlude: the same dense motif features prominently, as does the high-high-low motif to conclude segments. Meanwhile, as in previous soloistic passages, Kim Yongt’aek continues to switch unpredictably between on- and off-beat accenting and to present long strings of equal-duration strokes (eighth notes) in the left hand (for instance, compare with Example 28). In the other performance of *tchoshigae* that I recorded in 2000, Kim employed the same segmentation pattern for this interlude (suggesting that it was a favorite), but he also applied another: 4 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 4 (twice). Evidently, then, he was liable to switch between a variety of different segmentation configurations in this interlude, although he invariably favored a mixing-up of segment durations to ensure greater unpredictability.

1. See Mills (2007, 49) and Track 1 in the book’s accompanying CD for an example of Kim Junghee’s application of this same patterning within *tŭrŏnggaengi*.

Example 32 is a 30-beat cycle in 4/4 time, divided into two parts: standard patterning (top) and playful patterning (bottom). The standard part features a 'rumbling stream' motif (beats 1-4) and a 'high-high-low' motif (beats 5-8). The playful part features a 'stilted unpredictable accenting' motif (beats 1-4) and a '4 to 3 to 2 contraction' motif (beats 5-8). The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes) and rests, with a large 'X' marking the beginning of the playful section.

**Example 32.** Kim Yongt'aek's patterning in the second chapter's interlude (30-beat cycle; 8:11–8:41).

Finally, for the third chapter's 20-beat interludes, Kim Yongt'aek favors  $5 + 4 + 3 + 6 + 2$  segmentation, which prevails throughout all three of the interludes with only a few exceptions. Example 33 shows the first three cycle renditions for the second 20-beat interlude, including another playful variation with markedly different segmentation configuration (10:49–11:06). Again, one can easily see the same points of commonality with the first chapter's interlude: in addition to the prevalent use of the dense motif and high- high-low motif, close variants of both the 5- and 6-beat patterns are readily apparent. Here, too, Kim Yongt'aek employs extensive unpredictable switching between on- and off-beat accenting. The remaining two variations from this interlude are almost identical to the second so have not been represented.

Example 33 is a 20-beat cycle in 4/4 time, divided into two parts: standard patterning (top) and playful patterning (bottom). The standard part features a 'close variant of the 50-beat cycle's 5-beat pattern' (beats 1-5) and a 'dense motif' (beats 6-10). The playful part features a 'close variant of the 50-beat cycle's closing pattern' (beats 11-15) and a 'dense motif' (beats 16-20). The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes) and rests, with a large 'X' marking the beginning of the playful section.

**Example 33.** Kim Yongt'aek's patterning in the third chapter's second interlude (20-beat cycle) (10:49–11:06).

In every instrumental interlude, while Kim Yongt'aek performs his long streams of dense patterning characterized by unpredictable accenting, each hand-gong player adds his own independent layer of dense patterning on top, freely switching between repeated cells of differing lengths and shapes and playfully subjecting them to processes of transformation, including contraction, expansion, and variation. Crucially, the ideal is for each player to create segment boundaries and accenting falling at different times from those marked by his fellow musicians, with patterning also frequently traversing the cycle's start/end point. Here, the goal is not sensitive dialogic musical interaction but rather self-indulgent free play, and the result is a wonderfully complex texture, especially when there are no novices present seizing the opportunity to emulate the elders' patterns. Example 34 shows Kim Junghee's hand-gong patterning during the third chapter's second interlude—the same interlude represented in Example 33 (10:48–11:17). To highlight how Kim Junghee's patterning proceeds independently of Kim Yongt'aek's, the latter's segmentation boundaries have been indicated by dotted lines.<sup>2</sup>

Example 34 reveals how Kim switches between miscellaneous short cells of varying character and duration (between 2 and 6 eighth notes), repeating each an unpredictable number of times, and evincing numerous shifts in the frequency and nature of the accenting (highlighted in red) that he contributes to the composite texture. Notably, he includes cells

Kim Yongt'aek's favoured segmentation boundaries

traversing

20/4

X

x 15 (3)

wash patterning: no accenting

traversing

x 3 (3)

contraction

x 7 (2)

swinging motor-rhythm

x 2 (6)

contraction

x 5 (5)

contraction

x 2 (3)

x 8 (4)

x 4 with variation traversing (3)

x 7 (5)

traversing

X

**Example 34.** Kim Junghee's hand-gong patterning in the third chapter's second interlude (20-beat cycle) (10:48–11:17).

2. When attending this particular ritual, I purposefully positioned the microphone closer to Kim Junghee than the novice ritualists; otherwise, without the use of multiple cameras or microphones, it would have been impossible to isolate a single line from the thick wash of metallic sound.

that create an accent-less wash of sound and short motor-rhythms that combine swung rhythm with strong accenting to fuel the music's forward motion. He also applies the transformational process of contraction—again, to enhance the music's feel of forward momentum.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, *tchoshigae*'s interludes are intended to do much more than merely provide a short break from the officiating shaman's song. Firstly, they are designed to permeate the listeners' minds with loudness and incomprehensible complexity, promoting a suspension of rational thought and evoking a sense of divine presence. Under such a sonic bombardment, wherein accenting comes from all sides thickly, quickly, loudly, and unpredictably, the listeners cannot pursue mundane lines of thought but neither can they cognitively latch onto and make sense of the streams of sound, simply because the composite texture affords such a paucity of regularized anchoring elements. None of the ritual attendees will have experienced enough performances of Ogu Kut to have acquired a functional understanding of the musical frameworks involved, with their prescribed numbers of beats and norms of segmentation in the drum part. Accordingly, they will surely experience these interludes more as unintelligible washes of potently energized sound, characterized by a remarkable three-dimensional quality, wherein the music changes in accordance with attentive focus—different lines coming up into the perceptual foreground while others recede into the background. At the same time, such musical structures, characterized by unpredictably ever-changing poly-segmentation, are commonly regarded as having a cleansing quality; the exact same qualities pervade the three-chapter structure *p'unōri* and five-chapter structure *tūrōnggaengi*, both of which are performed in conjunction with purification rituals, with the ritualist Chōng Yōllak once describing *tūrōnggaengi* to me as a form of musical detergent. The use of hyper-stimulating cognitively challenging musical structures to clear the mind of mundane patterns of thought, clean the ritual space of unclean elements, and prepare the way for religious experience is now very well documented in ethnomusicological scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, these interludes may well play a role in promoting a particular conception of spiritual reality. According to this shamanic culture's world view, reality is inhabited by innumerable spirits, of both the living and the dead as well as an extensive pantheon of gods. Believers understand these spiritual entities to be active forces in the lives of the living and able to travel at great speeds, not being lumbered with bodies. The spirits of the sleeping are also understood to be able to take flight, giving rise to fantastic dreams (see, for example, Kim T'aegon 1998). Ritual texts such as those sung for *tchoshigae* are indicative of such a world view, stressing the busyness and complexity that characterize this only partly visible immanent reality and suggesting that much the same qualities characterize "that world" (*chōsūng*), which is typically depicted more as a reflection of "this world" (*isūng*) than a serene

3. See Mills (2010a) for further analysis of hand-gong playing within this tradition.

4. See, for example, Hodgkinson (2000), Avorgbedor (1987), Friedson (1996), and Koen (2009), with Friedson's observations (1996, 139–47) about the three-dimensionality of such music seeming particularly pertinent to this case.

paradise. Hence, in *tchoshigae*, the deceased spirits are instructed to hurry back and forth to gain permission from the afterlife's country and regional heads, the 10 gods of the underworld, the ancestral spirits and other authoritative entities before "whooshing" (*hōu hōu*) back over the mountains and through the valleys to enter the ritual space. While many types of human gathering are believed to be attractive to the spirits, as the song text demonstrates, the ritual space is purposefully designed to be particularly tempting—a magical "jewel" to which they are vigorously summoned, with diverse offerings provided on the altar (for the more desirable spirits) and scraps periodically thrown outside (for the less welcome ghosts). Within this context then, it seems likely that the ritualists' wash of sound—with its many alive-seeming constituent lines moving in unpredictable fashion at uncannily fast speed—may indeed serve to evoke the impression of an atmosphere that is alive with spirits.

At the same time, during these interludes, the ritualists demonstrate the cathartic benefits of indulging in vigorous playful behavior that is both collective and self-indulgent and which, crucially, involves breaking free of well-established constraints—habitual patterns of thought and behavior. As soon as each interlude begins, although the preceding cyclic duration is retained, the ritualists abandon the specific manner of subdividing it which has become cemented over the course of many cycle renditions; each musician then pursues his own path of patterning, with the hand-gongs paying no regard to the drummer's segmentation and, in most cases, not even to the start/end points of the cycle. Accordingly, Kim Yongt'aek and his cousin Kim Junghee often described this kind of playing to me as "release hitting" (*p'urōch'inŭn kōt*), drawing a direct link with "*p'uri*"—the release of negative energies (*ek*) which, as was mentioned earlier, is often identified by Korean shamans as the primary objective of their rituals.

Later in Ch'omangja kut, the bereaved and spirits of the dead are obliged to permanently relinquish their ties to each other so that the former can proceed with their lives and the latter can proceed to the other world, and significantly, it is at this point that the ritualists perform their most extreme form of "release hitting": two ritual musicians play together at impressively rapid tempo, each additively stringing together a succession of small patterns of differing lengths, creating music in which both parties share the same pulse but neither are constrained within a metric framework. Example 35 shows Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Junghee playing such an episode in the selected case-study ritual, seeking to liberate the spirits of Sō and Hwang; the tempo here is 220 bpm (where a "beat" is a quarter note), with the whole passage lasting a mere 21 seconds. To begin, Kim Yongt'aek establishes the shared denominations by playing a succession of simple patterns at rapidly increasing tempo and, thereafter, the two ritualists seek to pursue their independent paths. As shown by the red and blue segmentation markers, their frantic patterning diverges, converges, diverges, and converges, providing a vivid sonic reflection of the spirits' conflicted condition. Further bursts of "release hitting" ensue immediately afterward.

Finally, of course, the instrumental interludes are ideally suited for showcasing virtuosity. Here, the ritualists manage to attain high levels of precision and nuance even when

speeding up.....

rapidly slowing.....

speeding up.....

cont...

X

**Example 35.** "Release hitting": Kim Junghee (top) and Kim Yongt'aek (bottom) play un-metered patterning reflecting the conflicted state of the deceased spirits.

playing incomprehensibly complicated musical structures at furious paces, demonstrating masterful control over their hands, instruments, and time and pointing toward an uncommon long-term commitment to the fostering and application of specialized skills. In this context, virtuosity is also associated with transcendence: those present in the ritual tent sense that the ritualists' extraordinary skills are enabling them to "burst . . . through the bonds of formal restraint" and push the boundaries of what can ordinarily be realized (Till 2003–04). Although these particular ritualists lack the supernatural powers of their charismatic counterparts (*kangshinmu*), these displays prove that they are still far from being "normal people" (*ilbanin*). In conjunction with their still-maintained "secret language" (*ūnō*), their vibrantly colorful clothing, their extensive knowledge of archaic texts, myths and symbols, and, historically, their endogamous kinship practices (see Mills 2007, 13–18), their displays of uncanny musical skill have always served to demonstrate that they are "not entirely of this world"; indeed, from the ritual attendees' perspectives, the kinds of structures, techniques and aesthetics discussed

in this article would always have been regarded as truly extraordinary, having little in common with the familiar arts of everyday life, such as *p'ungmul* (percussion band music), *p'ansori* (epic narrative song), *minyo* (folk song) or things heard on the radio. Not surprisingly, the ritualists themselves often allude to the special skills that they have been cultivating over many generations; for example, in other performances of *tchoshigae*, Kim Yöngsuk sings that the deceased spirit's salvation depends not only on correctly following ritual procedures but also on "receiving the skills (*somsshi*) from us 100-year ritualists (*paeknyön ch'egwan*)."

### CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this article, I have sought to elucidate the rhythmic content of one of the most complex structures in the East Coast shamans' repertoire—the three-chapter structure known as "*tchoshigae*"—as performed by the recently deceased Kim Yongt'aek, his wife the shaman Kim Yöngsuk, a few hand-gong players (including Kim Yongt'aek's cousin Kim Junghee), and a player of the large gong. In addition to unpacking larger-scale structures and examining smaller-scale rhythmic details in all constituent parts, I have tried to go some way toward answering the essential question "Why is this music like it is?," which has necessitated also considering the contents of the sung text and assessing how the musical features relate to the all-important ritual objectives of Ogu Kut, a post-death ritual performed to ensure that deceased spirits and the bereaved can find peace. To my knowledge, this article constitutes the first ever attempt at such an analysis in relation to a complex Korean East Coast shaman musical structure, although naturally, there are notable elements remaining to be examined—most obviously, the handling of pitch, mode, and melody and the interpretations of other ritualists. In this concluding section, rather than reiterate previously made points about *tchoshigae*'s most salient musical characteristics, I will home in on the essential functions served by this music and offer some concluding remarks about Kim Yongt'aek's artistry.

To generate convincing insights into the intended effects of these rhythmic structures and patterns, it is clear that one must pay close attention to both the ritual context and the song text. As has been detailed, *tchoshigae*'s text serves not only to entreat the deceased spirits to return but also to make clear the difficulties of traversing between parallel worlds, the deeply conflicted predicament of the human spirit (of bereaved and deceased alike), and the pressing need to strive for a state of harmony despite the challenges faced. Of course, this seems like a wholly apt way to begin the pivotal Ch'omangja kut section of Ogu Kut, situated midway through the ritual. With such content at the forefront of everyone's minds, the rhythmic interplay that Kim Yongt'aek and Kim Yöngsuk indulge in appears to be serving a distinctly representational function. Essentially, these two ritualists—existing as two individuals yet living and working together as the two halves of a husband-and-wife unit—seem to be presenting the ritual attendees with a sonic representation in microcosm of more fundamental and all-pervasive aspects of spiritual reality, wherein the different planes of existence are understood to coexist and be linked but between which and within which

perfect harmony is transient, with degrees of disconnect being an ever-present symptom of independence. While the polyrhythmic interplay of *tchoshigae*'s first chapter parallels the song text in presenting a meticulously detailed exposition into the nature of harmony and conflict, the interlude sections seem to present more uncompromising reflections of spiritual multiplicity, not as we would wish it to be but as it actually is, with many independent entities vigorously pursuing their own personal paths, at the same time and with limited regard for what the others are doing. In this way, the ritualists appear to be calling upon their advanced musical skills to make the intangible forces and processes characterizing this belief system temporarily perceivable for the ritual attendees. As was discussed earlier, actualization-through-art continues to be an essential tool later in Ogu Kut, when the ritualists employ musical performance to help actualize the severing of the spirits' ties to this world; it is also critically important after that, when they enact the deceased's journey to the other world, making the bereaved fully realize that their loved ones have departed for good (described in Mills 2012, 153–54). For these ritualists, then, musical artistry serves as an essential substitute for oracles: despite lacking the "spirit power" (*yŏngnyŏk*) that would enable them to transform their own bodies into vehicles for the spirits' self-expression, through their performance skills, they are still able to give the impression of being individuals who are supremely skilled at comprehending, representing and manipulating the invisible and largely incomprehensible forces thought to lie beyond normal human perception.

At the same time as serving representational and actualizing functions, the ritualists' music also serves therapeutic functions. As has been shown in the foregoing analysis, *tchoshigae* is rich in unpredictability, changeability, ambiguity and complexity, as is much of the rest of the ritualists' repertoire. These characteristics contribute greatly toward making the music highly fascinating to all those present, capturing each listener's attentional focus (with the sheer loudness itself demanding attention), luring that attentional focus outward and away from self-reflection, passing it back and forth between the music's various constituent parts, and prompting constant re-evaluation of temporal frameworks and relationships—these being standard responses elicited by complex music, including polyrhythmic music (see, especially, Hesselink 2013). In particular, the music has been shown to present innumerable instances of abrupt unpredictable change (throughout all sections), ambiguous patterning (for example, the multi-stable patterns in the first chapter), polyphonic multiplicity (most pronounced during the instrumental interludes), and patterning evoking processes such as cleansing and release (for example, during the aforementioned "release-hitting" episodes and in the drum patterning for the second and third chapters). Within the context of this healing ritual, where the bereaved are caught up in repetitive sorrowful thought patterns, these musical features seem to be functioning as what Hinton and Kirmayer (2017) term "flexibility primers," working in conjunction with various other potent elements within the texts, ritual actions, dance, and psychodrama employing symbolic paraphernalia. In short, they help to break unhelpful patterns of thought and behavior, promote "openness to new ways of being" (4), "creat[e] a sense of choice and switch" (16), "motivate, evoke, or enact an experience of change" (6), and ultimately "work to promote cognitive and emotional flexibility, which can



contribute to better coping, problem solving, and adaptation” (28). As Hinton and Kirmayer discuss, there is now a substantial body of ethnomusicological literature that explores such applications of music within healing rituals, showing how it can be effectively employed to prepare the mind for psychological change and then enact and promote desired psychological transformations via a model-and-shift mechanism (see, for example, Roseman 1991; Friedson 1996; Koen 2009, 2013). This current article contributes another case study to this growing field of enquiry.

Crucially, while all of the multi-chapter structures in the East Coast shaman repertoire begin with cycles like those of *tchoshigae*, which are rich in unpredictability, changeability, ambiguity, and complexity, they always follow a progression leading to predictability, constancy, unambiguousness, and simplicity—a progression that has also been documented in other ritual traditions (for example by Avorgbedor 1987, 14–15). Once the ritual attendees have been suitably primed for change by a structure such as *tchoshigae*, after various truths have been isolated and propitiatory and release-facilitating actions have been completed, the onset of greater clarity is enforced and celebrated musically through a process of fusion, wherein everybody’s attention becomes distilled in a repeated driving rhythm, ideally prompting all present to get up and dance; this is when the aforementioned model-and-shift process is felt to have reached its fruition.<sup>5</sup> In Ch’omangja kut, this transformation takes place long after the performance of *tchoshigae* has been completed, only after the deceased’s final sentiments have been presented through weeping-song (*urūm sori* or *shisōl*), after their ties to this world have been severed, and after they have finally resolved to make the journey to the other world.

As was mentioned at the start of this article, I was initially prompted to listen to my old fieldwork recordings and undertake this analysis after hearing of Kim Yongt’aek’s passing. Kim was a consummate ritualist who personified the East Coast hereditary shaman tradition’s ideal by training together with his wife Kim Yōngsuk from when they were both teenagers and then performing alongside her over many years to develop a shared mastery of the repertoire permeated by deep mutual understanding and hyper-sensitive awareness of each other’s skills, knowledge, and moment-by-moment intentions. Accordingly, while the foregoing analysis has sought to cast light on the patterns for which Kim Yongt’aek was celebrated, it has also aimed to show how his remarkable skills were intimately tied to those of Kim Yōngsuk.

In addition to being a masterly ritualist, Kim Yongt’aek was also a traditionalist who remained steadfastly true to the old ways of performing within the tradition. In interview and conversation, he would often rail against the softening of the style by ritualists who had dabbled in other traditional Korean percussion genres such as *p’ungmul* and *samullori* and who brought a stage-like refinement into the ritual space. A key principle of shaman ritual is that

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5. See Mills (2010b) for an analysis of Kim Yongt’aek’s handling of simpler rhythmic patterning in the context of ritual narrative song.

the tough realities of life should be brought into the frame of consideration so lingering problems can be addressed and bad energies (*ek*) be released (*p'uri*); as Ch'oe Kilsŏng (1980, 230–35) observed in his pioneering study of the East Coast shaman tradition, the most celebrated shamans insist on complete transparency. In line with this principle, shortly after the previously analyzed performance of *tchoshigae* was over, Kim and his wife encouraged the bereaved to unburden themselves of all the complaints they were harboring against the deceased and against other parties present in the ritual tent; the boat-shaped spirit vessel containing Mr. Sŏ's spirit was in tatters after the grievances had all been unleashed. To Kim Yongt'aek's way of thinking, overly delicate musicianship is not well suited to such a context, and I recall watching his reaction as he stood at the edge of the ritual space during another Ogu Kut in 2007 when one of the most virtuosic young-generation ritualists was taking his turn at the ritual drum. Although the young ritualist's playing was extremely fast and every stroke was immaculately placed, it was a decidedly delicate display conforming to a new concert-friendly aesthetic, and perhaps it was only I who saw Kim Yongt'aek frowning and shaking his head as he watched. In contrast, Kim uncompromisingly maintained a grittier approach: he would unfailingly arrest and sustain everybody's undivided attention by playing with unremitting power and volume and, while his playing would often evoke perfectly harmonious relationships, he did not shy away from presenting people with an abundance of thrilling moments that seemed somehow remarkably true-to-life in being characterized by pronounced unexpected disjuncture.

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